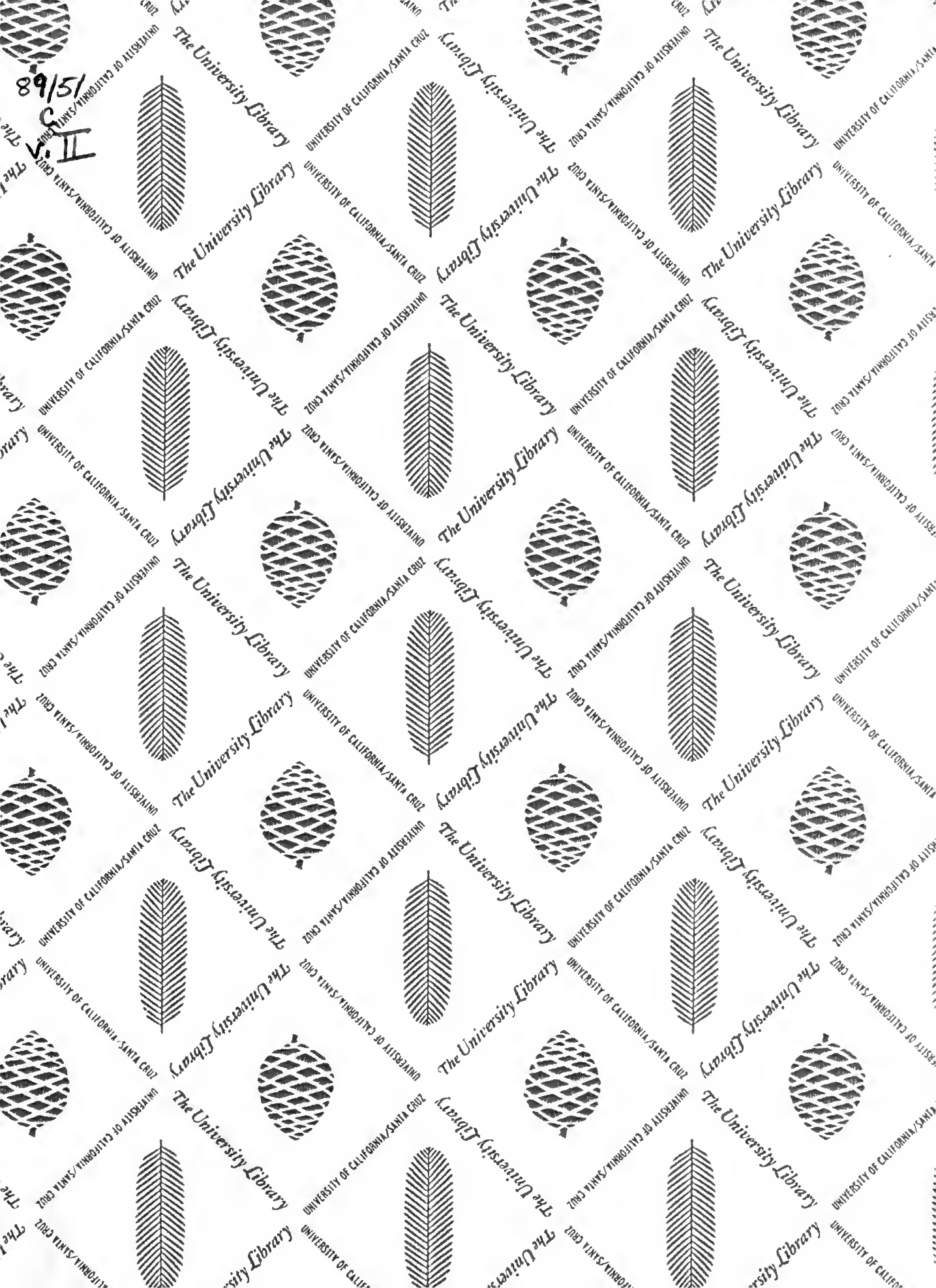
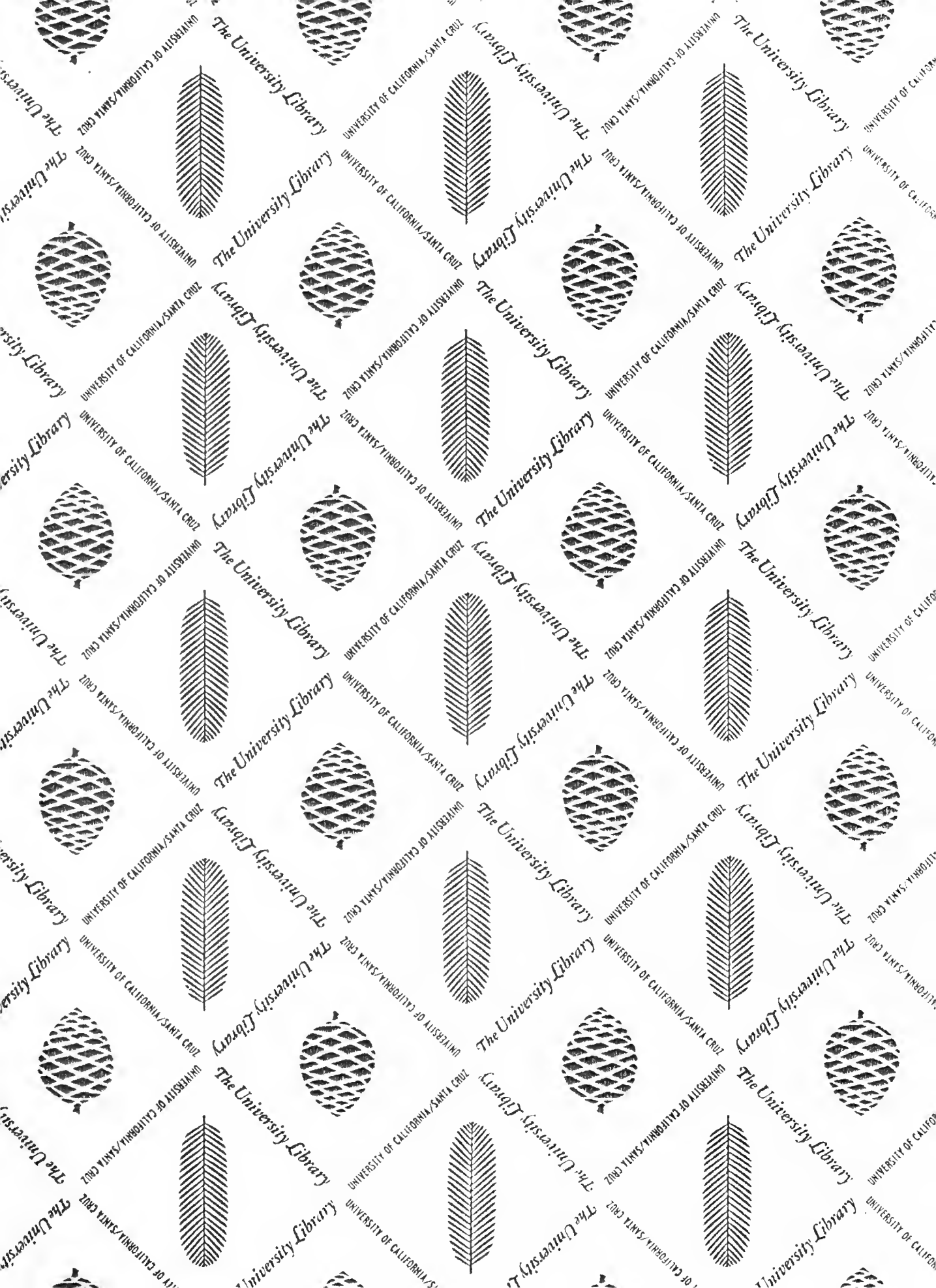


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Florence Richardson Wyckoff  
Fifty Years of Grassroots Social Activism  
Volume II  
Families Who Follow the Crops, 1937-1959

Interviewed and Edited by  
Randall Jarrell

Santa Cruz  
1989





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## INTRODUCTION

*Families Who Follow the Crops, 1937-1959*, is the second of a three-volume series of oral history memoirs, *Fifty Years of Grassroots Social Activism*, documenting the career of Florence Richardson Wyckoff. Best known for her advocacy in behalf of migrant agricultural families, she has worked tirelessly since the 1930s to improve the living conditions of migrant workers and families who follow the crops. At the national, state, and local levels she has promoted maternal and child health care, education, housing, social services, and improved economic entitlements and opportunities for this group of workers. Despite some positive changes in their living conditions, agricultural workers remain to this day outside the progressive mainstream of organized labor and are denied the many rights and benefits most Americans take for granted.

On April 6, 1988, at the reception for Florence Wyckoff held at University House, University of California, Santa Cruz, on the occasion of the dedication of the Wyckoff Archive<sup>1</sup>, Professor William H. Friedland, a noted scholar of agricultural labor issues, characterized Wyckoff and her work:

Mrs. Wyckoff was a pioneer in the period during which those issues began to be defined as *issues*. Prior to the 1930s, the conditions of life agricultural workers were hardly recognized as "problems." It took the better part of four or five decades of the existence of migratory farm labor, the Great Depression and its upsets, and the development of Roosevelt's New Deal, before health, education, the conditions of children began to be perceived as distinctive problems. Mrs. Wyckoff, functioning both in California and at the national level, was at the center of events of government programs that pioneered work on such

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<sup>1</sup> The Florence Richardson Wyckoff Archive is in Special Collections, McHenry Library, University of California, Santa Cruz. The Archive contains a major portion of Wyckoff's personal papers from the New Deal era through the 1970s, including papers documenting social policy issues in Santa Cruz County. There is also a collection of her papers, including Richardson family history, at Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley—Editor.



issues. As such, her archive will be a valuable resource to future historians when research begins on how such issues became defined as issues.<sup>2</sup>

The 36 hours of taped interviews from which these volumes are derived were conducted with Wyckoff in her home in Corralitos, California, during the ten-year period from February 1, 1976 to May 25, 1985. The first volume, *Early Years*, published in 1987, begins with her childhood in Berkeley, California, where she was born in 1905 into a cultured and progressive family. The narration includes her political and cultural coming-of-age during the depression and her first forays into the political arena in California where she was active in the founding of the Theater Guild in San Francisco, and was involved in the urban labor movement. It concludes with Wyckoff's experiences visiting Farm Security Administration migrant labor camps in California where she found the cause which would absorb her energies for the next fifty years—the plight of migrant agricultural families and the substandard living conditions under which they struggled.

Additional biographical information about Wyckoff's early life and a description of how the interviews were conducted are included in the *Introduction* to the first volume. The *Chronology* in the third volume of her memoirs also provides an enumeration of her myriad activities, many of which are not discussed in her oral history.

Wyckoff's narration in volume II, *Families Who Follow the Crops, 1937-1959*, begins with her work in Culbert L. Olson's Democratic New Deal gubernatorial campaign in California during 1937-38 and concludes in 1959 with her inauguration in California of the first Conference on Families Who Follow the Crops, a keystone in Wyckoff's coalition-building and lobbying campaign which resulted in the passage in 1962 of the Federal Migrant Health Act.

Unfortunately we were not able to include in a single volume Wyckoff's narration of this story in its entirety due to the technical limitations involved in the computer-production of these manuscripts. Therefore, we split the manuscript and continued the narration of the events leading up to the passage of the federal and state Migrant Health Act as the opening chapters of volume III, *Watsonville Years, 1960-1985*.

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<sup>2</sup>This paragraph is quoted from Professor Friedland's written *Remarks* with his kind permission. His address in its entirety is included in the Wyckoff Archive—Editor.



### Olson's New Deal in California

During the 1937 gubernatorial campaign of Culbert L. Olson, who sought to implement a New Deal in California, Wyckoff was a dedicated campaigner and member of Olson's informal "brain trust," where she set up various issue-oriented advisory committees which studied the problems facing the candidate and his administration (relief, rural poverty, labor issues, racism, unemployment, migrant labor conditions). When Olson was elected in 1938, Wyckoff was appointed Community Relations Director for the State Relief Administration, interestingly, the only paid position she has held during her career as an advocate. She worked to improve the desperate conditions of the rural dispossessed later dramatized in John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and describes Steinbeck's participation in compiling data on migrant workers for the campaign research groups. She provides commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of the Olson Administration; on the intense partisanship and red-baiting which hindered their legislative efforts; and the meaning of this political experience for her subsequent activities. Some of the topics discussed in this section of the manuscript include Dewey Anderson and the embattled State Relief Administration [SRA]; state versus local control of relief programs; the importance of the federal Farm Security Administration [FSA] and FSA camps; federal/state relations; and a commentary on Governor Olson. She also discusses the significance of the La Follette Committee hearings in California.

### Washington, D.C.

At the outbreak of World War II Wyckoff accompanied her husband, Hubert C. Wyckoff, Jr., to Washington, D.C., where he had been appointed Deputy Administrator in the War Shipping Administration. During her sojourn there she worked for Food for Freedom, and was active in the Women's Joint Congressional Committee, an important lobbying group in the Capitol. This period served to educate Wyckoff in the art of lobbying, at which she became singularly adept as she testified before congressional committees on agricultural labor issues and sought to keep the Farm Security Administration alive during the war years. She also became part of notable Washington social and political circles, and counted among her friends many New Deal figures. Her many Washington contacts stood her in good stead during subsequent years as she continued her lobbying in behalf of migrant families.

### Settling in Watsonville, California, 1946

After the war, in 1946, Wyckoff and her husband settled in Corralitos, just outside the city of Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley, an agricultural community, where she became deeply involved in local social issues. In 1947 she formed the first citizens' public health committee, which eventually



became the Pajaro Valley Community Council, which addressed a diverse agenda of public health and social issues including milk pasteurization, restaurant inspection, school immunization programs, and the hiring of the county's first fulltime health officer. Wyckoff discusses some of these developments in this volume and continues the narration of her local activities in volume III.

### **California: Governor's Committee on Children and Youth**

Wyckoff's activities at the state and national levels continued unabated alongside her myriad county commitments. In 1948 she was appointed by Governor Earl Warren to serve on the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth, a position which enabled her to influence state public policies in the areas of public health and social services. Most importantly she had a visible public platform from which she could continue to educate policy-makers on the health, housing, education, economic, and living conditions of rural and migrant families. Her tenure on this advisory committee continued under four governors and along with her colleagues she advised policy-makers on an array of legislative enactments. Her wide-ranging discussion of the issues which concerned the committee over the years provides a fascinating picture of the post-war evolution of state social services and the extent to which the once radical New Deal notions of government public responsibilities had infiltrated state government, and become "givens" under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

During the late 1950s and early '60s, Wyckoff was a major organizer of the five Conferences on Families Who Follow the Crops, held in California, which brought together growers and migrant workers, and included participants from rural county governments, social and public health workers, state officials, teachers, members of migrant ministries and labor organizations, all of whom were working in different ways to address the living conditions and well-being of migrant worker families. Certainly the interdisciplinary approach of the conferences to the problems of this population was in itself pioneering; the influence of these meetings on policy-makers laid the groundwork for the eventual passage of both the California and federal Migrant Health Acts in 1962, which established public health clinics for farm workers nationwide—along both the eastern and western migrant streams. This volume concludes with Wyckoff's commentary on the origins and significance of the first Conference on Families Who Follow the Crops.

This manuscript was edited by the interviewer and returned to Mrs. Wyckoff for her amendments and additions. She worked over the manuscript with great care and attention to detail, and provided clarification on a number of points. Although we attempted to check every proper name mentioned in the





manuscript, we were unable to verify all of the spellings. Just prior to publication, Mrs. Wyckoff graciously offered to read over the laserprinted "proofs" of the manuscript to catch spelling errors of proper names. If any still remain, however, the editor alone is responsible.

A special acknowledgement goes to the Project's editorial assistant, Irene Reti, upon whose shoulders fell the heavy burden of overseeing the computer-production of the manuscript. She showed endless patience, ingenuity, and good cheer in her work with balky software and the frustrating and puzzling word salads that periodically appeared on the computer screen during production.

Copies of this manuscript are on deposit in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; and in Special Collections, McHenry Library, University of California, Santa Cruz. This manuscript is part of a collection of interviews documenting California agricultural and labor history which have been conducted by the Regional History Project. The Project is supported administratively by Marion Taylor, head of Collection Planning, and University Librarian Allan J. Dyson.

Randall Jarrell

August 8, 1989  
Regional History Project  
McHenry Library  
University of California, Santa Cruz



## THE NEW DEAL IN CALIFORNIA: THE OLSON POLITICAL CRUSADE

### The Olson Gubernatorial Campaign and the Depression in California

Jarrell: Today we'll begin talking about the background of Culbert L. Olson's campaign for governor in 1937-38—the preparations, research, and policy studies which preceded his election. How did you come to take such an active and encompassing part in the Olson Campaign and later in his administration?

Wyckoff: I think that one pathway by which I got into this was through my exposure to new ideas at the time that I became Industrial Chairman of the YWCA [during the period] 1934 to 1938 and got into the encouragement of unions for women and learning of their difficulties in relation to the labor movement. Gradually the whole political scene began to become more real to me. I saw that we were about to have a very exciting election with a big change in government. I wanted to be part of this. And so did some of the interesting women that I had met in the course of my work in the YWCA. I think Brownie Lee Jones [of their Industrial Department] for one had a great deal to do with it. She encouraged me to get into this. Through her I met some active political figures . . . and they were largely labor-oriented. So I got in deeper and deeper until . . . I was a willing worker and a volunteer.

I had been very active in getting the [San Francisco] Theater Union started. The people involved in that theater also had a big interest in how you made things happen by working in the field of political action.

Jarrell: How did you become involved in so many aspects of the campaign? Who were the people with whom you first worked through whom you became an important participant [in Olson's campaign]? There are so many names in all of these meeting minutes and correspondence you gave to me to look over. Even though some of them are familiar to me . . . would you select some?



## Pre-Election Research and Policy Planning: The Olson Brain Trust

Wyckoff: Well, perhaps . . . I found one letter that explains a great deal and I wondered if you'd like to have this. Do you want to stop and look at this letter which I wrote and I'll read it into the record? The letter is dated November 28, 1938, and is from me addressed to Dr. Dewey Anderson.<sup>1</sup> He was formerly an Assemblyman from Santa Clara County, and he was very close to Governor Olson. Dewey became his State Relief Administrator.

Dear Dr. Anderson: I've gone ahead with the Committees on relief, welfare, and labor following your instructions. Enclosed is the list of the membership of each of these groups. I'm trying to prevent too much duplication of effort by seeing that one or more members of the special sub-committees on a given subject such as the transients and migratory labor are also on the labor committee, the relief and welfare committee, and the agriculture committee as each of these groups wishes to consider these problems from a slightly different angle. Out of this procedure we should develop a well-rounded set of surveys if all goes well. It is remarkable and inspiring to see the enthusiasm with which these men and women have tackled the big assignments given to them. No one needs to be urged. Of course everyone looks to you for the final guidance of the work into constructive, concrete results. They have all complete faith in you and the eagerness to pitch in to help make this the best state in the union. It's a fine thing to see. I hope that Senator Olson understands the real significance of this spontaneous effort of so many disinterested people to participate in making this the best administration we ever had, by following up the election with a sustained and carefully organized support for his program and policies.

Here is a quotation from a letter from Dr. Martha Chickering, Professor of Social Welfare and Director of the School of Social Work at the University of California—"The policy of calling together such a committee seems to me to indicate a very wise and forward-looking approach to the subject on the part of the Governor-elect." This is typical of the attitude of many of our people and is spreading confidence in Olson. The labor committee and the lawyers had a hard time thinking in any other terms than as a pressure group and they wanted to start right in punching . . . so it seems wiser to allow the chairmen of the research committees to meet quietly and do their work

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<sup>1</sup> Dewey Anderson, a Democratic Assemblyman and later, State Senator, from Santa Clara County, became the Director of State Relief in the Olson Administration—Editor.



separately and allow others to work on the problem of setting up machinery to keep the big labor groups and the number one organizations here lined up back of Olson's progress. They seem to be solidly behind you too and want to give you every assistance. All of these research committees have lifelines out to large popular organizations through which support for legislative programs could be gained. And I think this phase of activity should be seriously considered because it will come later quite naturally and must be guided where it'll do the most good.

I hear that Ellis Patterson wants to organize a council of liberal organizations for support and publicity in legislative fights. Should we do anything about that? We are steering clear of all discussion of specific persons for political jobs because these committees would be wrecked in no time if we got on that tack. Individually, members may do as they please of course, but the general feeling is that if we got into any group discussion of appointments, the validity of these reports might well be challenged that they were only a buildup for certain people. Then, too, it is very embarrassing for federal people who have helped us prepare the reports to be present at such discussions and we might seriously injure the chance of appointment of those who are best qualified. There is a job analysis section of the welfare committee which may be of benefit in making decisions. It will come with a full report.

I'm making headway on the visual instruction committee. This is a very big project and should be carefully placed in the right hands. Dorothea Lange Taylor is going to Washington [D.C.] to interview Pare Lorentz, the man who has made one of the finest federal motion pictures on this subject (unemployment)<sup>2</sup>. She will be back in January and we should hold the fort until then if possible.

Could you write a letter to the labor committee giving them some official reason for going ahead. Harry See got up and said he thought our committee was being officious. We should have some answer for such remarks as that. There's been absolutely no publicity about these research committees. But wherever the idea has leaked out, it has created a very good impression and counteracts that bad crackpot publicity which was shouted in the newspapers during the campaign. It would be a very good idea if

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<sup>2</sup> Pare Lorentz, a pioneering depression era documentary filmmaker, produced *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936) and *The River* (1937) for the Farm Security Administration—Editor.





you could attend the social welfare meeting on Thursday, December 1, for supper at the YWCA, then the meeting at 7:15 in the board room. You can see from the enclosed list the large scope of the work. I think you will find them a most efficient committee to work with.<sup>3</sup>

Jarrell: Could you give, if you can recall, a brief summary, first of all, of how these groups were set up . . . which we didn't really discuss, and who oversaw the organization into these policy areas? Whose work was this? It's very encompassing work. I see from your files that there was the Labor Research Committee and an Agricultural Policy Committee. . . and many others.

### The Influence of the Community Organization Movement on Policy Planning Committees

Wyckoff: Yes, Well, if you recall, in those days we were all very interested in something called community organization. And these were principles that had been developed. The California Conference of Social Work was one of the prime movers in community organization. They were very interested in all research covering social and community problems during the depression. Anita Eldridge was then secretary of the CCSW. There were studies being made by the Russell Sage Foundation and all kinds of groups on how you go about organizing to get public input properly [into the political process] and make decisions. And how you drew the best brains together to do things. Roosevelt had been through the brain trust and we knew the pitfalls of the [Roosevelt] brain trust, and how an elite brain trust without any connection with labor organizations, PTA . . . rank and file, this kind of thing would not be very useful. We were trying to keep this connected with the basic population groups, not a little ivory tower, even though we were working with university [and academic] people. But they were mixed in with, as you can see, with a lot of people who were not [from the] University.

Jarrell: I can see that.

Wyckoff: And these lists show that<sup>4</sup> . . . For instance, George Kidwell was a terribly important person in all this [pre-election work]. Now he, you see, turn[ed] up on the Welfare and Relief Committee. He [was] also on the Labor

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<sup>3</sup> Wyckoff wrote in the margin of her manuscript that this letter, which she read aloud during the interview, was included in the Welfare and Relief Committee file, which is part of the Florence Richardson Wyckoff Archive, Special Collections, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz—Editor.

<sup>4</sup> Campaign documents, membership lists and related materials are part of the Florence Richardson Wyckoff Archive, described in footnote #1—Editor.



Committee. He [was] also in a number of things that deeply affected labor. He was on the Health Insurance Committee.

Jarrell: Didn't he just die?

Wyckoff: Not too long ago, yes. He lived to be quite an old man. Two other important people were Barbara Armstrong and Emily Huntington, both from the University of California, who drafted the legislation of the magnificent report here on health insurance. It's a wonderful report.<sup>5</sup>

Jarrell: Yes. Dr. Huntington was from UC Berkeley.

Wyckoff: They both were. But they were working with a Health Insurance Committee that contained two longshoremen, and it was a very broad committee. Their report is signed by . . . I've got that report here . . . we're going to have to take a little time out to look up some of these things.

Jarrell: And what about John Shelley, for instance?

Wyckoff: Yes, I think he was a bakery wagon driver. Later he became a State Senator and then a Congressman. But you see these committees were not little ivory-tower committees at all. It was a hard struggle for people like Emily Huntington and Barbara Armstrong to learn how to speak in language that Herman Stuyvelaar could understand. And not use those academic terms that are just totally obfuscating to a layman.

Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: And it was good discipline for them. They had been in an ivory tower too long and they had to break out of it. And I know now they look back on it as quite a high point in their lives—very challenging. I don't know how Herman felt about it, because I think . . . well, he suffered I know, trying hard to understand. They worked terribly hard, all of them. They worked sincerely, and as far as I know, there was just nobody that I remember that just threw in the sponge and said this won't work. And it is remarkable the gigantic volume of work they put out [from these committees]. There's a pitiful letter from the Governor's secretary here, Kenneth Fulton, who remained with the Governor through his entire term of office . . . he says: "other groups in the south [of the state] are doing the same thing. And we have reports on their recommendations for welfare relief, labor, medical care, health insurance, all the subjects that you're considering. But we would like to have you boil them all down."

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<sup>5</sup> A copy of this report is in the Wyckoff Archive—Editor.



Jarrell: Whom was he addressing?

Wyckoff: Me. He says in this letter: "We would like to have you, your committee, boil them [these reports and proposals] all down . . . and make them into short, concise summaries so the Governor can grasp them." I threw in the sponge then and said, "No, we have nothing but volunteer staff here. We cannot do this. You have money, you can hire people, you can do it. We cannot do it. You've been elected, it's your job to do it. We'll turn this over to you."

I think that's one reason why the whole thing was nearly lost, because. . . well, it wasn't really lost because actually. . . as I look through some of this correspondence, I see that the legislation was put in, some appointments that were recommended were made, and it did have a profound effect, there's no doubt. Olson evidently took these things very seriously. So this was an attempt, as you saw in this letter, it was an attempt to put together the kind of support that would get the legislation through. Not just to make recommendations into thin air. But to make recommendations that the bakery wagon drivers' lobbyists could go up [to Sacramento] and work for because one of them had helped to draft it. And Olson had got support that would come from not only the bakery wagon drivers but from the PTA and from a lot of other groups. That was the theory behind the whole thing. So we were doing a kind of exercise in political science.

Jarrell: Yes. Now in the letter you just read into the record here, first of all, you certainly had a strategic grasp . . . you'd been through the campaign, you knew the mudslinging and red-baiting that'd been going on . . . so I see your suggestions as strategic advice. I would like to know what kind of a position were you in . . . in terms of power, your influence, in terms of Olson's organization?

Wyckoff: Well at first my little home was the place . . . the address . . . where all the letters, the correspondence, had to go. Then we were donated an office in the Liebes Building [in San Francisco] I notice [from the stationary].

Jarrell: But at this point, you were working as a volunteer?

Wyckoff: Entirely as a volunteer. Entirely.

Jarrell: You had no official appointment.

Wyckoff: No. Nobody received any money. I don't think the stenographers got any money, and we needed a vast amount of typing.

Of course, I think that the federal agencies helped . . . because we made a climate in which they could feel free to give us comments on our



recommendations . . . for example, here [from my files] is a careful analysis that obviously was made by the Farm Security Administration on the situation with regard to migratory farm workers in California . . . that is a fascinating report.<sup>6</sup> The depth of the misery that existed in the state then is unbelievable. You have to dig into that report to see how incredibly bad things were. We were really at the bottom of the depression then. We had not come out of it.

**Jarrell:** This is just fascinating.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. That is an astonishing report. There are two copies of it. Well, you can see that the average income figures [then were] \$200 a year.

**Jarrell:** \$200 . . . yes.

**Wyckoff:** It was incredibly bad. There are recommendations here to raise the minimum wage. We dared to recommend 38¢ an hour and that it should go up to 40¢ and we dared recommend that the 40-hour week be a goal! We felt very brave.

**Jarrell:** But the agricultural workers . . . that was a whole different kettle of fish.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. Yes. Oh. It was a whole different kettle of fish. You realize what a long way we've come since then. Well, in looking back over this period, I have the feeling that it had a profound effect on me. And after I folded up all these papers and put them away for so many years when I went off to Washington [D.C.] . . . I hadn't realized until you got me to looking at [them] that I have actually followed out a lot of these recommendations instinctively all my life. I've just worked on them.

**Jarrell:** I have noticed in my research the continuity . . . there's that thread in your work and activities.

**Wyckoff:** Yes, there is . . . I realize it's just gone on. You're profoundly influenced by things where you have just given everything you could, you know, to make something work. It influences you. And I think my character was formed during this period rather intensively.

**Jarrell:** To return to discussing your position [in the campaign] and what your responsibilities were. Whom did you report to? To Dewey Anderson?

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<sup>6</sup> A copy of the report on agriculture is in the Wyckoff Archive—Editor.





**Wyckoff:** Well, of course, [to] Dewey Anderson . . . one way to get a message through to the Governor was to write a letter to Dewey Anderson, and somehow he got it through to him. This was helpful. People found out that we had a good channel to the Governor. The Governor was not a brilliant man. And he had to be . . . well, told things several times perhaps before they sank in. And I think that he had a lot of distractions and troubles of one kind or another. . . some within his family. And Dewey seemed to have his ear, and this was good.

### Edward Macauley

**Wyckoff:** So we . . . part of this group moved through Dewey but Captain Edward Macauley was General Chairman . . . Dewey Anderson was the sort of intermediary, but Captain Eddie Macauley, I think, was Honorary Chairman of the whole policy umbrella. Captain Eddie was appointed by President Roosevelt as head of the Civil Works Administration because he was an old Roosevelt friend. He was a kind person, a very sweet man, just a very nice man; loyalty was his prime quality of course. He was a loyal Roosevelt man, a loyal Democrat. He had enough prestige or relationship with the Roosevelt Administration because he was a close, personal friend of Roosevelt . . . so that if Governor Olson needed entrée or introductions in Washington, Captain Eddie could arrange this.

Well this correspondence gives you the action . . . what was going on behind the scenes, the pulling and hauling in all of the organizations. What the committees were trying to do in terms of organization, public relations, tackling very controversial things.

For example, there'd be a big scandal over the dumping of oranges . . . people were starving and here they were burning oranges. Well, our committee wrote a lot of letters asking how do you explain this . . . to the federal departments, to the [Department of] Agriculture, to all the various people who were involved . . . and then we got answers back. And these are all in the files. And these were used as background for reports to go to Governor Olson to give him something to put in his speeches, you see. Most of these reports seem to have been put together for Olson to take to Washington to ask for certain considerations for California from the big federal agencies there and from the Congress. And . . .

**Jarrell:** It's very obvious even in the minutes that federal aid or federal participation in taking a share of the burden was always uppermost in many of these areas . . .



## Labor Research Committee

**Wyckoff:** Now the University of California was not the only one. I think we had as many people from Stanford as we did from the University of California. Did you happen to see the labor file?

**Jarrell:** I have the minutes of the Labor Committee.

**Wyckoff:** The labor file is a very interesting thing . . . the correspondence here.

**Jarrell:** I didn't have that.

**Wyckoff:** John B. Canning and Bill Hopkins were interesting members of this committee, you know. They came from Stanford. And Canning was a professor of economics, but he was making a close study of the labor movement and he attended these labor meetings and he wrote to George Kidwell a lot of letters; there were some very interesting letters about what the labor movement was doing at that time.

You see, the C.I.O. [Congress of Industrial Organizations] was separate; the A.F. of L. [American Federation of Labor] was separate; and they were trying to find ways of working jointly.

And here is a letter to George Kidwell from John Canning describing a meeting of the delegates from the councils and unions in the ninth district, ninety delegates present. They effected an organization with a fine set of officers; the name adopted is the Five Counties Labor Legislation Conference. And Kaspar Bauer introduced a resolution: "whereas a recent inter-union discord has seriously endangered the whole labor movement in California, and whereas continuation of the discord may lead to the destruction of unions, now therefore is resolved this body commend the action taken at Stockton in reuniting all the unions. Be it further resolved this body urge all unions and labor councils to effect a like reuniting of unions" and so on. And then it shows that Ed Vandeleur (AF of L) got up and said, "This is bad. You shouldn't do this." And Canning and the rest of them turned around and disciplined Ed Vandeleur. And you see that Vandeleur is pretty much the devil of the moment which is a rather interesting sideline on what was going on then. You see, we were trying to work in a situation where there was a lot of hauling and pulling in the labor movement.

The labor members listed here . . . here are some of the names:

Germain Bulke, John Benson, Vernon Burke, H. C. Carrasco, A. F. "Gus" Gaynor, George Kidwell, E. A. McMillan all from labor unions; Sheriff Dan Murphy . . . now I recall that he came from the Teamsters Union . . . but I



can't be sure. Wendell Phillips was also Teamsters; Mrs. Helen MacFarland, George Olshausen, James Ricketts, Elizabeth Sasuly, John Shelley, W. C. Shields, Herman Stuyvelaar, Alexander Watchman, Hazel Woods, and Harry See. Then there's a number of non-labor people. They were called advisory. And those were people from various walks of life that were . . . Thomas Addis, Wesley Ash, . . . now Wesley Ash was in the labor department, unemployment, let's see . . .

Jarrell: S.S., it says after his name.

Wyckoff: Social Security, yes. Then, Barbara Armstrong, Louie Burgess, he was with the Newspaper Guild. Why he wasn't with the labor committee I don't know. He was with the [San Francisco] *Examiner* or the [San Francisco] *Call-Bulletin*, I think. Helen Valeska Bary, who was with the Social Security, Milton Chernin, of course, was with the University, Artie Eggleston was with the newspapers, Al Gershenson was with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Aubrey Grossman, Arthur Harris, William S. Hopkins at Stanford, Emily Huntington, UC, Henry Melnikow . . .

Jarrell: Henry Melnikow, right?

Wyckoff: He was head of the Pacific Coast Labor Bureau and he did an awful lot to make this thing work. To help the labor people get their reports together. Richard Neustadt was head of the Social Security, now the (IX regional Office of HEW), Dr. Paul Taylor, Matthew Tobriner, he was an independent lawyer in those days of the Lawyers Guild. He's now a Supreme Court Judge.

Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: Dorothy Williams, she's another judge, she was a lawyer, Irving Wood, another lawyer, and Florence Wyckoff. The labor reports are absolutely fascinating.

### A Pioneer Proposal for State Health Insurance

Wyckoff: I am so thrilled when I read that health insurance report again, signed by Dr. Thomas Addis, after all these years, to realize how up-to-date it is and what a lot of valuable stuff it has for us. We haven't made much progress since then. And I think this health insurance report is one that ought to be sent up to Dr. Paul O'Rourke (health consultant to the State Senate) right now. I hadn't realized that we had [done] things that are now current . . . the research that was done then would be a help to them right now. We have just been fumbling and bumbling along. Of course we lost our attempt to get health insurance through by one vote. That was a brutal thing,



to lose it by one vote. And now here we are still not having it, still not having it.

Jarrell: Thirty-seven years later.

Wyckoff: Yes. That's right. We missed out.

Jarrell: Would you like to talk about that report, about what makes it so noteworthy? I have not read it.

Wyckoff: Well . . . it is a detailed report on how you would go about setting up a compulsory, universal health insurance system.

Jarrell: On a statewide basis.

Wyckoff: On a statewide basis. And it has some very important things in it. It had actuarial studies that proved that you simply could not make the plan function financially on an insurance basis unless you had universal coverage of everybody.

Jarrell: Everyone.

Wyckoff: And you had to have the good risks and the bad risks. And you could not allow what has happened [currently] in allowing private insurance to skim off all the good risks and government to subsidize all the bad risks. This is where you get into a situation where you're just throwing public money away.

Jarrell: It gets it all out of balance.

Wyckoff: Yes. And there's a very interesting history of the arguments within the California Medical Association, and how they realized that they were going to have to favor voluntary group medical service at least. And they were gradually taking steps towards reconciling themselves to the idea that eventually they were going to have to face some form of health insurance. And the arguments are eloquent here. And it's beautifully written. Of course Emily Huntington and Barbara probably wrote it. It is signed however by Dr. Thomas Addis. Now of course if you knew anything about Dr. Thomas Addis, he was regarded as the most left-wing member of the entire medical fraternity. A totally independent, absolutely outspoken person who had no fear . . . he was of the royal purple. He was the chief kidney man on the faculty of the University of California medical school. So he could have ideas that were totally . . .

Jarrell: Above reproach.





**Wyckoff:** Yes. He was above, he could be as revolutionary as he wanted and nobody dared say "boo." And his peers just said he's a nut because he's so full of socialistic ideas. And of course what happened, when they saw Dr. Thomas Addis's name on there, all the physicians probably said, "Well, we won't have any part of this." But we didn't care. He was a working member of the medical society and the only one that just wholeheartedly went for comprehensive health insurance, which was great. We were lucky to have one who knew the internal workings of the medical world enough to be able to help us. And then Barbara Armstrong, Emily Huntington, E. A. McMillan was from the railway unions, I think. And Murphy was from the Teamsters; Stuyvelaar from the Longshoremens.

**Jarrell:** So this report was submitted to the Governor-elect?

**Wyckoff:** Yes. They didn't make a lot of vague generalizations here. They made a specific structure, spelled out exactly how the whole thing was going to work: who was to be covered; how much they should be paid; what their income should be; who was outside and who was inside; they had quite a hard time covering the self-employed, but they worked out a plan to do that. They also had a hard time covering the migratory farm workers, but they worked out a plan for that. But the vast majority of people were to be covered through the existing unemployment compensation mechanism. And by enlarging the act. Then it stipulated how people were to be disciplined if they violated any of the regulations, and all health care was completely covered. It's very interesting what the contributions were to be . . . on this they were able to agree. A large number of people received under seventy dollars a month. They made no contribution and the employer paid a contribution of two percent of the payroll. From seventy to one hundred dollars the contribution of the worker was one-half of one percent and from one hundred to two hundred dollars a month it was one percent; and over two hundred dollars a month, it was one and one-half percent, and the employer paid one percent and the contribution of the state and federal government was one-half of one percent. And the funds were raised by this device.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** And they worked out all the mechanics of the whole thing. So that they weren't handing Olson something that was just a vague, general recommendation. I think this is true of a great deal of this work. It was actually worked out in detail so it could be handed to a committee of the legislature for specific action.

**Jarrell:** Now, if we use this health insurance report as a sort of case study since we can't possibly talk about all of the committees' recommendations . . . once the report was completed by the research committee, what was the sequence of events leading up to possible legislative implementation?



**Wyckoff:** I know that probably what happened was that he [Governor Olson] would normally turn this over to a cabinet-type committee composed of his Director of Finance, or his Director of the Department of Welfare . . . whoever was concerned with a piece of legislation. And they would form a staff committee which would study this and decide . . . probably there might have been another recommendation of this sort coming from Southern California, and then they would of course decide what they were going to do in the way of drafting specific legislation. And they'd have to work with the legislature to do that. And that meant a legislative committee. And legislative liaison, all this sort of thing. So, within the mechanism of government, there were a lot of next steps that had to be done. This simply was put in the hopper as . . . well, as the framework that you started with.

**Jarrell:** The report was in such extraordinarily complete form.

**Wyckoff:** Yes, it was.

**Jarrell:** That even for today it is remarkable.

**Wyckoff:** It was remarkably complete. It says who shall draft the regulations and this sort of thing. So it gives a lot of outline of what the regulations might contain, so . . . in a way, it was a very thorough job. All the reports weren't as thorough as that. The one on housing is almost as thorough. And the one on labor camps and all of that is very good. The one on minimum wage and fair labor standards of course, that's a good report.

### Agricultural Policy Report on the Small Farmer

**Jarrell:** Were there reports done on farm cooperatives and successful cooperative experiments, do you know?

**Wyckoff:** No. That was done down south. We didn't. But we had one fellow, Montressi, who was a farmer from Santa Clara County who tried to . . . who has a report. Did you read his report on agriculture?

**Jarrell:** No.

**Wyckoff:** Well, it's here. But it's more a series of recommendations on how to keep the small farmer from being completely wiped out.

**Jarrell:** Well, this report I read last night, it's called *The California Agriculture Problem*, a report by a voluntary committee, but there's no indication of who wrote it.



**Wyckoff:** What about at the end of it? The names are usually at the end where they sign it . . . they didn't sign it.

**Jarrell:** There were no names. The report contained an analysis of the increasing importance of large-scale industrial farming . . .

**Wyckoff:** Yes, yes.

**Jarrell:** . . . at the expense of small scale agriculture, and how to deal with it "without drastic doctrinaire measures." I think that's the way it was phrased in the report.

**Wyckoff:** Now here is [an example of] the written criticism by Dr. Dewey Anderson on the Agricultural Report, page 1: [with his suggestions for tightening up and substantiating the argument] The trend toward increasing dominance of large-scale production: a. the trend is not proven; b. show positions and importance of acreage or small-scale farmers by types of acreage.

You see, he criticized these things so that the final report would contain what he thought was needed, to make it more effective.

**Jarrell:** The proper statistics. Because in this they do not document sufficiently with statistics or define their terms.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. Here, Dr. Anderson again: on page 3: "large-scale farm. Rather ambiguous, be more specific." On page 5: "first paragraph presumes that reader is thoroughly familiar with conditions and knows really that the small farmer is declining."

You see, this is his criticism.

**Jarrell:** There is no evidence.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. [Here are some more of his comments:]

on page 9: "cooperatives . . . this is too abstract for the Governor to follow. Final Need: in terms of this report and its premise: 1. Examination of the present agricultural codes, statutes and administration, make findings. 2. List specific administrative changes required. 3. List new legislation required. 4. Suggest as to kind and rate of change. 5. Statement of Rural Electrification Program where the REA will loan money to farmers to put their own generators where the local company will not reduce the rate."

See, these are very specific points that he has raised [to improve the report].



Jarrell: These are critiques of this report. So this must have just been like a draft. But it is not signed.

Wyckoff: Well, it was probably the first draft. I do not have a complete file as you can see.

### The Steinbeck Committee to Aid Agricultural Organization

Jarrell: Then the report, the program of the John Steinbeck committee to aid agricultural organization and how to help and offer relief for agricultural workers. And I came across Mr. and Mrs. Steinbeck's name on the letterhead. Were they just named on the masthead there, or did they actually participate?

Wyckoff: They had their own committee on agricultural labor and conditions and they sent us materials.

Jarrell: I see.

Wyckoff: So that we [had] reports from several groups that [came] in. Steinbeck's group was one. And all of this was put together. Yes. We were receiving things from all over 'cause we were a gathering place of reports from many, many groups. And we sent them on to the Governor. Did you see this agricultural policy committee, identifying who these people were and where they came from?

Jarrell: No. That wasn't in this file. I got the minutes and some of the correspondence and the reports.

Wyckoff: I see. I found the correspondence the most interesting part of the whole thing.

Jarrell: Maybe I could take a file of that and read it.

Wyckoff: You could if you want to. Yes, you can take all of these.

### Wyckoff's Role in Olson Election Campaign

Wyckoff: It was quite a surprise to me, the change from working on these documents and working with all these university professors and intellectuals during the pre-inauguration period on this great paradise we were going to create if we won the election, you know . . . to the rugged business of actually getting out the vote. Getting the Governor, the candidate transported from one place to another without any trouble was very important. Suddenly finding myself in charge of the whole calendar of speeches, appearances, and everything in Northern California . . . and I had never tried to do anything like that in my life. Of course, there was a nominal man who was a big, fat,





cigar-smoking judge who was the titular head of what I was supposed to be doing. He was supposed to be doing this. And I was the Girl Friday, you see, who had to do it.

Jarrell: Who did it in fact.

Wyckoff: There's always that sort of situation. You have the front person and then you've got a slave in the back room who's doing it all, and that was me at the moment. And the telephone bills . . . (laughter) . . . I think we had, I remember they said the telephone bill for this week is two hundred and fifty dollars, and that to me was just a fortune, you know . . . I thought that's the biggest phone bill I ever heard of.

Jarrell: A fortune.

Wyckoff: I heard of another one later that was more.

Jarrell: Where were your northern California headquarters for the election campaign?

Wyckoff: At Montgomery and Market Streets, that's where it was. Around the corner in a little building that . . . it just had the big, ground floor open. It was really funny, because I had never before seen a woman's division. I want to tell you that there is something about a woman's division of any political party that is the most frightening thing I think I ever got into. They were full of Miss Americas who came sailing in with great, broad hats; and very regal people demanding that this and that be done. They were all entirely unwilling to cooperate with anybody else about anything. So I soon found out that if there was one thing you wanted to avoid, it was the woman's division. (Laughter) And being a woman made it very difficult.

Jarrell: Were these women Democratic party regulars?

Wyckoff: Yes. They had been holding tea parties for years trying to keep things alive, you know [during the Republican administrations].

Jarrell: And this was the first time . . .

Wyckoff: And this was the first time they were going to gain recognition. They were all dressed up and ready to be the real Queen of the May.

Jarrell: Could you really put them to work?

Wyckoff: Never. They wouldn't do any work at all. They wanted to be on the stage. They wanted to be . . .



Jarrell: It was the ceremonial aspect that was appealing?

Wyckoff: Yes. They wanted to be on the letterhead, on the stage, and they didn't want to do a lick of work.

Then there were some interesting minority groups. There were the Italians, and there were the Germans. And they all wanted to be recognized as separate groups and they had their own halls . . . the Sons of Italy . . . had their hall and . . . they had to have a speaker and if the Governor didn't come and speak to the Sons of Italy there was just going to be hell to pay. And you had to get it on his schedule, and you had to be careful not to snub anybody, and . . .

Jarrell: So you really had your hands full.

Wyckoff: I certainly did. They soon found out at my desk was the place where all his business was being put down on the calendar. So they bypassed the old judge and would come roaring in and demand that the Governor be at the Sons of Italy meeting, or some affair at the *rathskeller*. Or the various nationality groups that had their centers. So we had a very lively time, I remember, putting all that together.

My area reached from about . . . well . . . I guess it was, it would be just the center of the state . . . about San Luis Obispo, I guess, north. All the Sacramento Valley and the San Joaquin Valley. All this had to be handled from this little San Francisco center. Well, anyway, it was a time when we had these rumors and counter-rumors and awful things that would crop up. There were always people trying to spread a scandal, or do some damage at the last minute. I never was, you know, close to the Olson family at all.

Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: And I wasn't in that inner circle . . . I didn't want to be . . . and I was much more interested in the part of it that had to do with what was going to happen when we actually won and what was the action. I was not interested in the center of power.

Jarrell: Or the personal lives of these people?

Wyckoff: No. Not at all. I had no desire to invade their privacy . . . the Governor knew who I was, and I had some correspondence with him which I think I've turned over to Bancroft [Library at UC Berkeley]. I don't remember. Anyway . . . (inaudible) . . . I didn't know him anywhere near as well as I knew Governor Brown [Sr.] . . . who was here last week. He came for the election. Well, what . . . where do we go from here?



## Dewey Anderson and the State Relief Administration

Jarrell: In this period, in the winter of 1938, what was Dewey Anderson's role? He was liaison with all these committees . . . you knew that he was a conduit?

Wyckoff: Yes.

Jarrell: Through which information or pressing problems could be . . .

Wyckoff: Yes. I noticed I was directing letters to him in care of the Department of Finance in Sacramento. And I can't be dead sure why he was getting his letters there, but that was evidently where Dewey Anderson was before the actual inauguration.

Jarrell: That's right.

Wyckoff: So whether he had the cooperation of the Director of Finance, I don't know. Dewey, of course, after the election, was appointed almost immediately as the Director of Welfare of the California State Relief Administration. He was also an important member of the cabinet.

Jarrell: He was a very controversial member of the cabinet wasn't he?

Wyckoff: Yes. He was pretty controversial because the legislature was not very cooperative with the Governor. And curiously enough Dewey had always been a person who irritated the Legislature. I think the Legislature tried hard to punish him in many ways. Naturally every chance the Republicans got to block appropriations for the State Relief Administration, they did it. At one point they were so bad that they were appropriating relief money for only three months at a time. And we had to go back [every three months] . . . and here there were 500,000 families, something like that; it was an enormous number of people that were dependent on this relief money. And we had to go back every three months and go through all the hearings and the whole business just so they could punish people for being poor.

## Community Relations Division, State Relief Administration

Wyckoff: I was made head of something called the Community Relations Division of the State Relief Administration under Dewey Anderson. And . . .

Jarrell: This was your official title. Was this your first time in an official, paid capacity?

Wyckoff: Yes. I had never done anything official. Now I really had a job with a salary. My God, that was . . . in those depression days, you thought you'd



never do that. And it was a whale of a salary of about two hundred dollars a month, you know. Big stuff.

### The Anti-Communist Mentality and the S. R. A.

**Wyckoff:** I remember Dewey Anderson was caught in a battle between the very extreme right group and the left-wing group within the Democratic party. He had a man named Walter Plunkett whom he appointed as his assistant and I'm afraid that the Army Intelligence, the Navy Intelligence, all the super secret things were convinced that Walter Plunkett was a communist. And that created an awful hassle right there. They kept on snooping, and cross-examining, and trying to trap him and do all this. He was a Los Angeles man and evidently had a history of a lot of trouble down there. I know the *Los Angeles Times* attacked him and there were a series of articles trying to prove that he was sort of a redhot. Anyway Dewey infuriated me by saying that I represented his investment in the "right wing." And that Rose Segure, who was a social worker, who had a position in some other part of the department under SRA, but she was head of some social service thing, she was the "left wing." And this was to placate everybody. Well, all that did was just create a terrible storm. We both had to go up to the legislature to try to help. And of course I was supposed to play the right wing side of the street and Rose was supposed to play the left wing side of the street. Well, it was a ridiculous situation and it's a wonder we got any money at all. Of course what happened was that there was a gigantic turnover of people within the organization because right away the left wing group started to form something called the State, County, and Municipal Workers Union among the SRA employees. That set up a great hullabaloo. Then the relief clients organized in what they called the Workers' Alliance which was another one. So there were picket lines and pressure groups and finally the San Jose SRA office was bombed. It created such a hysteria . . . of course the bombing had nothing to do with these organizations. It was a desperate crackpot. But it was blamed on the SRA troubles, you know.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** It made everybody think, "oh, they're back of it." So you just can't imagine . . . the headlines . . . SRA was in the headlines every day. A scandal broke here, something was wrong there. The people were starving and there was all this inefficiency in the Relief Administration.

### State versus Local Control of Relief Programs

**Jarrell:** Do you think that one of the crucial issues in the SRA that came out of this was the whole question of state versus local control of relief programs?





**Wyckoff:** : Yes, there was a lot of that. There was a big fight about "the return of relief to the counties."

**Jarrell:** Which was a more, would you say, more reactionary and hostile (inaudible)?

**Wyckoff:** : Yes, it was. Because they figured that at the local level they would cut people off a whole lot more quickly. There was also the fact that State Relief enabled the state administration to care for people who moved from county to county. And we're a very, very fluid population.

**Jarrell:** That's right.

**Wyckoff:** : Not counting migratory farm workers.

**Jarrell:** No.

**Wyckoff:** I remember a study showing that thirty-three percent of the people moved their homes once a year . . . just that sort of thing. It just goes on all the time. So that state relief made a lot more sense than locally-controlled relief if you care about people. But the California Chamber of Commerce, the State Taxpayers Association, and I regret to say, a lot of very conservative big social welfare organizations out of Chicago seemed to think that local control was where you really had understanding, and where you got to know your neighbor, and all this wonderful idea—which were against state-managed programs. There was a "Bureau of Public Administration" which made a study and their staff came out, and I know that that was the very hardest thing we had to cope with . . . with this big academic important report that was put out saying that relief should be returned to the counties. That was really bad.

Things were not at all a bed of roses after all our lovely committee work during the campaign. We had believed we were going to make the world a better place to live in. We discovered it was a very uphill fight to do any of these things.

### **Wyckoff's Work in the Community Relations Division, State Relief Administration**

**Wyckoff:** Of course we were able to do some things. I had a very interesting job actually. My job was to go around to the different counties, fifty-odd counties and try to get them to make a local contribution for various state work projects which would employ the unemployed. We had a large number of unemployed people. The SRA would come in and set up road projects, water projects, and we had sewing projects, mattress projects . . . all kinds of projects to enable people to work. Now you had to make these the kind of



jobs that unskilled people could do. And SRA had to do that. And the counties had to contribute, I think it was fifty percent or at least it was a sizable amount which had to come out of the property taxpayers.

Jarrell: Who were not interested?

Wyckoff: Well, the big question was: would you rather pay outright relief, or would you rather have half and half and get some money from the state to support these people, you know. A lot of them would say, "Well, we just run them over into the next county," and that's what they were doing, see. So, I had a very rough time trying to get the contributions. I wasn't very experienced at it. But in the course of the campaign all over northern California, earlier I had had opportunities to telephone and arrange for meetings for Governor Olson and I met a lot of people in these counties. And I had, in other words, a few contacts where I could go.

Jarrell: Your little network of sympathetic people . . .

Wyckoff: Yes. I could go and say, "Now, we really need your help to do this." And I would get help. So I was able to get most of them going. But I did get into some awfully unfriendly places. I remember down in Visalia getting into that Hotel Johnson with a group of growers who wanted to throw everybody off relief to work for about 10¢ an hour . . . and they believed that there should be this, what they called the "shape-up" system at the gate where the starving people would come and work for anything, you know, in order to get this money. They thought the unemployed never would work unless they were hungry. These grower groups accused the State Relief Administration of feeding these people so they would not work. So we had a very hard fight with them.

I was so angry after that particular meeting that I went up to the State Director of Finance, Mr. John Richards, who was a Los Angeles businessman, head of the Metropolitan Water District, and a sort of a financial magnate who knew nothing about welfare or relief. But he was a man with a very good heart and he liked Olson and he liked his program. And so he accepted this job as Director of Finance and I think it was an astounding eye-opener to him as to what was going on in the world.

And I broke right in on him and went right in to this office and pounded on his desk . . . and I don't quite know how I succeeded in doing all these things without going through anybody; I seemed to have just opened doors and gone in. Anyway I went in and said, "It is shocking how they're behaving in Tulare County. They simply are not willing to let us have a relief program there because they want to throw everybody off to work for very depressed wages. I think we ought to do something." Well, he said, "We will take care



of that! What we're going to do is cut off all farm subsidies and all state money going into Tulare County."

Jarrell: Put the pressure on.

Wyckoff: Put the pressure on. "Now," he said, "you go down there and go up and down Main Street and you tell the merchants on Main Street that all of the money that goes for work projects, relief, and every contribution from the state is going to be cut off if they don't cooperate in establishing a state relief program in there . . . we will cut off everything."

Well, I went down and I told them. I said, "If you don't go before your board of supervisors and get them to approve support of the state relief program in there, at the next meeting they're going to cut everything off because of the attitude of your growers." Well, the little Main Street merchants who got most of their income from the people who were receiving relief and what-not from the state, they went in and they spoke up and said we don't want this program cut out of Tulare County because we'd go broke and the whole place would fall flat if you don't support this.

So the supervisors voted to keep the program in there . . . and it did at least, it did for the moment, shut the growers up. Although later on there were Ku Klux Klan attacks on the staff of the State Relief Administration in Tulare County. And there were cross-burnings and the houses of the social workers were ransacked and looted and turned upside down and there was a lot of trouble down there. So it was a very lively time. I can tell you that. I commuted back and forth between San Mateo and Los Angeles once a week.

Jarrell: What a trip.

Wyckoff: Driving through the valley up and back every week, for a long, long time. I'd be checking up on all the situations in the valley. I had an office in Los Angeles and one in San Francisco. And I never seemed to get tired. We all worked till midnight every night and never thought anything about it. We were on a crusade, you know, and thought we were saving the world. There were some pretty exciting moments.

Did I tell you about that time that Hubert [Wyckoff]<sup>7</sup> went with me over there? Well, Hubert went one day on a trip down there and he found the four little old social workers in the State Relief Administration in Visalia in a terrible state. They had been threatened by the Ku Klux Klan which burned a cross on their lawn. Hubert said, "Well, why don't I take the whole bunch of you to dinner up at Three Rivers? We'll get out of this town and go up there

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<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Wyckoff's husband, Hubert C. Wyckoff, Jr.—Editor.



and have a nice dinner." That's his solution, you know, to everything . . . have a nice dinner, and calm down.

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Wyckoff: So we went up to Three Rivers to this wonderful little country inn and everybody had a lovely dinner and relaxed and we all just had a wonderful time. But when we went back to town that night, their houses had been broken into and all their clothing pulled out of the bureau drawers and ransacked. And obviously their rooms were searched. We didn't know what was the matter, what they wanted. But later on we discovered that what they were looking for was a list of the union members of the State, County, and Municipal Workers Union. And they wanted to turn this list over to the Yorty Committee. The Yorty Committee was [headed by] Samuel Yorty and was one of those witch-hunting things. So they were looking for this list. But they didn't find the list, so they kept ransacking everything. Then the funniest comedy occurred when the hearing came. Hubert laughed over this; he thought it was one of the funniest moments. But Hubert is not a member of the labor movement, you will see in your interviews with him.<sup>8</sup> At any rate, the hearing was set up and all the relief workers, social workers and members of the staff came in, these were the suspected ones . . . and Sam Yorty pointed to a tall young man. He said, "I subpoena you now to come forward and speak." And the man went over and tapped him. So he walked down. And he says, "What's in your pocket?" He said, "Let me have that piece of paper in your pocket." And this bailiff or whoever he was went and pulled out the paper, and there was the list of the union [members] . . . he had brought it in his pocket. Imagine! And of course Sam Yorty got it [the list]. So he had it. And from then on the people on that list were hounded. They were hounded. I knew one girl, Max Radin's daughter, Rhea Radin. Her father was a law professor at the University of California. She was hounded from then on. They tried to get her fired; she was regarded as a kind of a symbol of people who were "reds."

### Division of Housing

Wyckoff: They set up . . . quite a vigorous division of housing in the labor department of the state and they really tried to get in and do some cleaning up of the terrible shack towns that we had.

Jarrell: Was that the Department of Immigration and Housing?

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<sup>8</sup> See Hubert C. Wyckoff's oral history memoirs documenting his career as a labor arbitrator, *Hubert C. Wyckoff, Jr., Attorney and Arbitrator*, volume II, interviewed and edited by Randall Jarrell, Santa Cruz, 1985—Editor.





**Wyckoff:** Well, yes they changed it to the Labor Department, Division of Housing, you see. And the recommendations were carried out. You see, there were very few counties that had any housing concerns, or any division of enforcement, you know. One of the jobs was to try to get the counties to set up these departments. The counties were doing sanitation work, but that was about all. It was pretty hard to get them to set up departments. And then trying to get the local housing authorities . . . we were pretty late in getting ours in Santa Cruz County, you know. We only got ours about seven years ago, I guess, it was. Not very long ago.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** We're the last of all the counties, I think, to get under the wire. But we've got a good one, a very good one. So I followed other things than just the state relief thing that I got so heavily involved in. But I never lost interest in all of this. And one of the things . . . traveling up and down the state as I did . . . I constantly visited, for example, the Farm Security Camps.

### **The Farm Security Administration and the Agricultural Workers Health and Medical Program (AWHMP)**

**Wyckoff:** I constantly watched The Agricultural Workers' Health and Medical Program, which was one of the most interesting things. That was a cooperative. Do you know about that?

**Jarrell:** I know something about it, but I would love you to talk about it. I've read about it.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. Well, it was a fascinating thing because . . . one of my good friends was Dr. Anita Faverman who was really a remarkable woman. She was one of [the] early, early ones to recognize that, in her work as Director of Maternal and Child Health, you know, for the state, that the migratory farm workers were getting no care at all.

**Jarrell:** It was an awesome problem, wasn't it?

### **Anita Faverman's Mobile Clinic for Migrants**

**Wyckoff:** Yes. It was just tremendous. She set up a mobile clinic and it was the first attempt at following the crops. When workers came in for temporary work, she would get her mobile clinic in there, you know, and do what she could. It was just outpatient work, the little black-bag type of medicine, but she had enough sense to know that you don't just hold a well-baby clinic when you've got a whole sea of sick babies, you know. So that was one of the things the public health people were so naive about . . . trying so hard to



separate their preventive and their treatment . . . And trying never to step into the field of the practitioner of medicine, the general practitioner, or the medical practitioner. They didn't want to do that.

Jarrell: Oh I see . . . it was more a sphere of influence issue than . . .

Wyckoff: They did not want to do treatment.

Jarrell: Right. Just vaccinations and hygiene.

Wyckoff: They only wanted to do prevention. Immunization and prevention, but never treatment. Because treatment belonged to the medical society. They lived in mortal terror of the medical society. It was ridiculous. Now they've finally overcome this idiotic separation. We now have health service agencies that put the things together where they should be. But anyway, this woman, Anita Faverman, was very realistic and a remarkable woman. She also brought in the first Margaret Sanger woman, Millie Delp, I think.

Jarrell: For birth control?

Wyckoff: Yes. She's still alive too. Millie Delp worked for Margaret Sanger in the first birth control program among migratory farm workers. There was no publicity . . . it was underground, it had to be underground.

Jarrell: Oh. So scandalous?

Wyckoff: Yes. And women would meet under an oak tree—here and there would be an underground message saying that she'd be by the old spring near the such-and-such tree at the crossroads there . . . she would be there. She'd be there at a certain day, and a certain time if anybody wanted to come. Well naturally that sort of thing didn't reach a great many people. But when the Agricultural Workers' Health and Medical Association was finally set up, of course, Anita had done the preliminary studies and the kinds of testing of what was needed and how you get people to accept medical care, and this sort of thing. So that when Farm Security [Administration] set up their AWHMA clinics in the [FSA] camps, Anita's work was really the basis for what they did. They had a system in which . . . there was a nurse who lived in a cabin on the grounds of the camp. She ran a service that was similar to a sickcall. Farm workers could turn to her. There were special hours for certain kinds of things. She also made liaison, if possible, with the local health department. She tried to get them to do what they could. She made referrals to the practicing physicians for treatment where necessary, because she couldn't function alone without that. Well, it was a very successful system. The Farm Security created a device which was really the kind of thing they do very much nowadays, but was then considered most unusual. The Agricultural



Workers Health and Medical Association was a non-profit cooperative with a governing board for farm workers' families. The Farm Security paid into the cooperative so much a head. In other words, AWHMA was totally subsidized with federal funds, but it was a separate non-governmental organization incorporated with its own board of directors like our non-profit private charitable organizations. All the money came from the Farm Security Administration, however. AWHMA lasted as long as Farm Security lasted. When that folded up, it ended, and there were no more clinics in the camps, and there was no more medical care except in county hospitals. In the meantime I think AWHMA tried very hard to educate the local health department to see that they had some responsibilities.

Jarrell: Responsibility to their own people, local people.

Wyckoff: But you know what happened after the end of Farm Security, all those camps were taken over by growers associations. The vast majority of them abolished the clinics and didn't have health service. They just sent their workers to the county hospital or to the local health department. So health care went into a period of the dark ages, you might say. So it was long years later that . . . I kept it in mind the whole time that Farm Security had made a remarkably fine attempt to reach the farm worker where he was at the time when he needed care and in a way that he could accept it. Reaching through his culture . . . no matter whether he was an Okie, or a Negro, or a Mexican, they had a system that would work. So in my attempts in later years with the Governor's Advisory Committee [on Children and Youth] and all the rest of it, to get the migrant health program going, we fell back on the experience of Farm Security and used that as a model for the present migrant health clinics which are now functioning not necessarily in the camps, but they are accessible now to farm workers in most of the heavily populated agricultural areas.

Jarrell: Why do you think that the original FSA clinics declined or ceased to hold their own, when there was still an overwhelming need?

Wyckoff: Because the war came along, and when the war came along you could see that it was going to be the death knell of Farm Security. Right after the war, it was abolished. When it was abolished, there were no more federal funds for any of it at all, so the whole thing collapsed.

Jarrell: There was a whole shifting of gears . . .

Wyckoff: Yes. FSA was dependent on federal funds, and there were no more federal funds. It just wiped out the migrant health clinics right there. So it just took a long time to get such a service started up again, using federal funds. The local people didn't pick up the tab when federal funds gave out . . . they just didn't.



## The Relief Problem and Federal/State Relations

**Jarrell:** Would you discuss in more detail the Olson Administration's relations with federal government departments which were important in your activities?

**Wyckoff:** Well, I was with the State Relief Administration as a minor employee, but I was given the duties of going around and dealing with fifty-eight counties to try to improve our relations with them since all of these relief and welfare programs required local contributions . . . and usually they were either federal, state, and local contributions, or they were state programs that required matching funds from the counties if they were going to operate within these counties. The SRA had a division of community relations, of which I was made the head. I had a staff of some very interesting people. William G. Reidy who later became the chief of the staff of the [U.S.] Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare which handled all the great medical legislation and all of the . . . well such educational programs as the National Defense Education Act . . . the one where the institutions were not subsidized, but the students were subsidized. So many veterans were able to go to school.

Well, Reidy was a very brilliant man. He was just a foot soldier in the SRA then and went around from county to county facing all the very antagonistic and highly emotional local people who were very much opposed to the Olson Administration's approach to things. The Associated Farmers<sup>9</sup> and groups like this were always in there battling to try to prevent the welfare program from existing at all. Because mainly they wanted people to be hungry enough so they'd be willing to come to work for very low wages. That was the general drift. So we had to face these constant local debates. So I needed people with great courage to go in to do this. Reidy was young . . . well he was in law school, and he'd dropped out because of economic pressures, and went to work for us. And he had a very bright mind. He was incidentally a graduate of the Meiklejohn School in Wisconsin, the famous Alexander Meiklejohn's school which was a great pioneer effort. Anyway, I also had several other strong characters on the staff who were able to do this kind of thing.

The relationships with the federal government were interesting, because . . . I think region IX as it's called, of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, which was then I think called the Social Security Administration, was composed of people who were generally sympathetic to the Olson

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<sup>9</sup> The Associated Farmers was a powerful lobbying organization during the 1930s, made up of growers and other related businesses, who, for the most part opposed agricultural labor organization as well as political efforts to improve the economic and social conditions of migrant labor—Editor.





Administration, but they were trying to be careful. They never were, I would say, very aggressive. But they backed us up pretty solidly in a nice, firm way. There was a general counsel there by the name of Arthur C. Miller who was a master at understanding the relationships with the state legislature, and helping us to solve very knotty problems in dealing with them.

Then there was a remarkable woman named Helen Valeska Bary who was the kind of person who spoke in a small, soft voice that you could hardly hear, but who had such a presence that the whole room would quiet down just to hear what she had to say.

There were times when I was asked to go on these expeditions up to Sacramento to face a committee of the legislature which was still dominated in great part by the Associated Farmers. I would go to Miss Bary and say, "I have to go up. Will you give me a hand?" Then she would reach into a desk drawer and pull out a little brown envelope and she'd say, "I will come with you." She'd put the brown envelope under her arm and we'd get in the car and drive to Sacramento and I would say, "You don't take very much baggage." She said, "No, but I have a nightgown and a tooth brush in this brown envelope." And she said, "I'm always ready." So we went to Sacramento, and we would stay in a little rundown hotel in the very poorest part of town, I remember, because everybody believed in economy in those days.

The Olson Administration, I remember, had a campaign song . . . I think it was based on the music of a tune called "Roll Out the Barrel" . . . and all night long you'd hear this loud music in this dreadful hotel. I can still remember. (Laughter) Miss Bary would take it all in stride and then go up to the legislature to these committees and . . . her presence was such that where there was a great confusion before she entered the room . . . when she sailed down the aisle to speak, the whole room quieted down. They would listen to her very carefully . . . because they knew that her words were extremely important and they generally were the words, "we cannot contribute any funds if you do not do this . . . or do that." She would let them know what the standards were for the contribution from the federal government. Well, this was of course the crux of most of these battles.

There was a remarkable legislator named Elmer Lore who was one of those dustbowl farmers who'd been blown out of his farm in Iowa, who'd come across like the Joads . . . but he pulled himself up and got himself elected from some district in Los Angeles. He had a remarkably good grasp of the whole picture of an extremely complicated welfare system. He had enough seniority and enough knowledge and grasp of what the political forces were . . . to be about the best champion we had there. He did remarkable work. Captain A.T. Peterson, who was up there lobbying for a thing called the Fish Reduction



Ship, for example, which was one of his pet projects . . . would also double as a lobbyist for us.

We had lots of friends of this sort who had their own little axes to grind, but they knew that the welfare recipients had maybe one Workers' Alliance representative up there. There was hardly a voice. So you needed a lot of friends from the various other walks of life, and they did rally around to help. This is what helped. The unions of course had their lobbyists there, and they would help too. So it was a question of mobilizing enough strength to face the awful crisis which occurred about once every four to six months. They never would give us an appropriation that would last a full year. So you couldn't tell, couldn't hire anybody for more than that . . . so . . .

Jarrell: as if the SRA were on the dole . . .

Wyckoff: It was just dreadful.

Jarrell: You constantly had to fight for every appropriation from a legislature which was against your New Deal?

Wyckoff: Just constantly fighting for every penny. Well, of course, I think this is the kind of paroxysm that a new administration has to go through to get itself established. There was a lot of ineptitude. I hadn't known anything much about the internal mechanisms of government, and here I was suddenly plunged into this business of going around to all the different counties and dealing with all these boards of supervisors. It was a learning process and a very hard one for a great many of us. The Democrats had not been in an administration for forty-four years. They had no trained people. There was nobody. We were stumbling around in circles and probably we were the most inept bunch that ever got into government. But we had great idealism.

Jarrell: You said this was in the nature of a crusade, initially.

Wyckoff: It was.

Jarrell: And here you were, plunged into the actual mechanics of doing it.

Wyckoff: Yes, this was it. Doing it. I remember that we never went home before midnight from the office. Nobody was paid overtime. The secretaries, everybody worked till midnight. Then we'd appear at 8 o'clock in the morning. It was simply amazing how hard everybody worked. This went on for . . . well, it went on for the whole term. It never ceased. We would never feel put upon to drive all the way down to Los Angeles and back.

Jarrell: Well, your schedule was just incredible.



**Wyckoff:** It was appalling what we did. But I think in a way it was a highly creative period. The federal government was open to suggestions for new ideas. There were some very interesting proposals that were tried. For example, self-help cooperatives, and various kinds of ways of letting people pull themselves up out of this terrible depression. I don't think people nowadays realize how great the depression was, or how bad it was . . . it was far worse than anything we've had so far. And it had a curious effect of making us all dependent on each other a great more than usual . . . there was a spirit of cooperation among people that was remarkably good. On the other hand, there were some very violent opponents to all this . . . you had to have a devil anyway, you know.

**Jarrell:** That's right.

**Wyckoff:** You just mobilized against that devil and that's what we did. Another federal agency besides the Health, Education, and Welfare group was, of course, the Labor Department. There was a great attempt to try to get through better labor legislation in the state. We all tried to help where we could in this respect, but that was mainly, of course, the activities of the unions. It wasn't until quite a bit later that I got deep into the whole business of farm labor housing which the Labor Department had some interest in. There was also the Simon J. Lubin Society<sup>10</sup> that worked very hard to create the Bureau of Immigration and Housing. I was very interested in that and worked with them.

**Jarrell:** Did the . . . just as an aside . . . did the Simon J. Lubin Society give you input in the original policy committees, before Olson was inaugurated?

**Wyckoff:** Yes. Very definitely. More down south than up here, but they did.

### The Minimum Wage Fight

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<sup>10</sup> The Simon J. Lubin Society was founded in 1937 to foster unity between migrant labor and small-scale farmers and to expose the anti-progressive political activities of California agribusiness. The Society's newspaper, the *Rural Observer*, published from 1937-1941, contained extensive documentation of the activities and interests of the Associated Farmers, and attempted to educate small-scale farmers on the common economic and political interests they shared with the labor movement rather than with large-scale agriculture. This effort to form a coalition between labor and family farmers against "big agribusiness," was a depression era revival of the late nineteenth century Populist strategy. In 1976, the Regional History Project conducted oral history interviews with Helen Hosmer, the primary founder of the Lubin Society, documenting her work in California for the FSA and the conditions of migrant labor during that period, as well as the history of the Society. The manuscript is in-process—Editor.



**Wyckoff:** Then there was the minimum wage fight which, of course . . . when I think back on that, that was unbelievable . . . because the growers fully expected everybody to cooperate with them in getting workers to work for as little as five cents and ten cents an hour. It was just appalling . . . fifteen cents an hour they thought was very, very generous . . . it was really bad. Other federal agencies, well there was, of course, as you know, there was the reclamation fight going on with respect to the Central Valley Water Project and you have all the material that Paul Taylor had.<sup>11</sup>

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** So I don't need to comment on that. We did have relationships with the Interior Department. At least I personally tried very hard to do what I could with my knowledge of the valley by taking representatives of the Interior Department around when they came. I took Oscar Chapman around. And Abe Fortas, I took around . . . to see the conditions.

**Jarrell:** Who was Oscar Chapman?<sup>12</sup>

**Wyckoff:** Well, he became the Undersecretary of the Interior. And Abe Fortas<sup>13</sup> was at that time head of the electrical power division and very interested in the 160-acre limitation.

**Jarrell:** Fortas was.

**Wyckoff:** Yes, both of them were. They were interested in that, but they had broader interests too. They were interested in the question of how electrical power was to be distributed; whether it was to go through local cooperatives and that sort of thing, or through the big utilities, you know. Ah, let me see, other agencies . . . running down through all those agencies.

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<sup>11</sup> These developments are documented in *Paul Schuster Taylor: California Social Scientist*, (3 volumes), interviewed by Malca Chall and Suzanne B. Reiss, Bancroft Library Regional Oral History Office, 1975—Editor.

<sup>12</sup> Oscar Chapman was Assistant Secretary of the Interior during the Roosevelt Administration, beginning in 1933. He later became Secretary of the Interior from 1949 to 1953. He died February 8, 1978—Editor.

<sup>13</sup> Abe Fortas began his association with the New Deal as a protégé of Professor William O. Douglas at the Yale Law School. In 1933 he was appointed an assistant chief in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. He was appointed Undersecretary of the Department of the Interior from 1942-1946. In 1965 during the Johnson Administration he was appointed Associate Justice of the U.S. States Supreme Court. He died April 6, 1982—Editor.





## Farm Security Administration Camps

**Wyckoff:** The Agriculture Department of course had Farm Security in it. We were enormously interested in that. Farm Security was one of the most creative federal agencies that was out here. They did some things that really were landmark experiments in handling rural conditions.

One of the things that made the biggest impression on future policy was the Farm Security experiment with three types of homes in these communities of houses, shacks we call them. They finally developed a kind of a stepping-stone program where a transient family would arrive, and they would land, and they'd be desperate. They would be put immediately in what was called a shelter. It was a very primitive thing. It didn't even have a water faucet inside in those early days. The water faucet was outside, and you had to go out and get a bucket and bring it back in. They were tin shacks. Sometimes they had a screen door, and sometimes they had nothing. But at least they had a roof over their heads. They landed there.

They were absorbed into a little sort of a community council, a tenant council, in which the program was explained to them. They were allowed to do the things that were of great importance to them. I know that one of the most interesting things was the desire for clean clothes. The amount of effort that went into getting a washing machine, getting an iron, getting themselves an "arn," as the Okies pronounced it. It was wonderful.

If they showed themselves to be people who really had some initiative and wanted to step up a little, they were promoted to a house that had inside plumbing and some more facilities. More comfortable, more rooms, and really better set up. Then if they proved themselves to be very good, neat housekeepers and also wanted to have a patch of land to grow vegetables on or something like this . . . they were graduated to something called a labor home. The labor home . . . felt like their own, it felt like their own home. Although they were all three of them what you might call rental units—very simple little units.

Well, this philosophy of graduate, improved living as an incentive to better behavior, better . . . well, as a reward for virtue, you might say . . . seems to have had a good effect and has been copied later on in other programs and found to be successful. And we're still trying to do it. Right now we're trying to do the very same thing here in Watsonville.

**Jarrell:** Would you say . . . now you said it's similar to what's being done today. I've heard of a cooperative in the Pajaro Valley in which zoning is being fought and opposed by residents of the area because it's being talked about as if it were a subdivision when in truth it's really a . . . it's a way to



make migrant people so that they're no longer migrants. So that they have a location at which they can live permanently.

**Wyckoff:** Right.

**Jarrell:** So the whole idea of taking a migrant labor force and . . . or, you know, nomadic group of people who are travelling in this cycle around the state and region . . . and making them participants in a community . . . it seems the very ground is being taken out from under them . . . literally . . . in a fight like this. Would you say that at the time we're discussing in the late 30s and early 40s that such a program in terms of the housing, in these three levels of housing, was, that this kind of thing was opposed by the growers? Or by other groups?

**Wyckoff:** It was opposed by a number of people. There was a feeling that these Farm Security camps were federal islands in the middle of a county. They wanted to be able to get taxes from those people, from that land, and that this was somehow rather a foreign fortress. The camps did not represent a docile labor supply; these people were being given support and advantages that other people didn't have. There was a feeling against the Farm Security camps. I think they finally made an agreement with the counties that there would be in lieu funds paid in the form of money that could be counted as tax money. There was also a much greater attempt to bring in local people . . . like a doctor to come in and be paid for giving his services.

### **Commentary on Governor Olson**

**Jarrell:** Now, I'd like to ask you about your impressions of Governor Olson. You said in our last interview that he wasn't quick, that he had to be told things several times. So in terms of these policy-planning committees . . . once things were boiled down and issues were presented to him and possible solutions or policies were put in front of him, that he got the general notion and would move on things. But in terms of assessing him, his personality, his ability to see something through, . . . how would you assess his tenure? I mean it was the first time California'd had a Democratic governor in over forty years. As you look back on it . . . how would you place him in terms of his effectiveness? I know many things, landmark things, experimental things, took place. They might not have seemed at the time that they would have a full life and live on, but you have discussed, for instance, the health insurance program and how a certain foundation in terms of policy was established that early. Here we sit today without comprehensive medical care of that kind.

**Wyckoff:** And we tried it, and we almost got it.

**Jarrell:** But the groundbreaking kind of thinking-through work was done.



Wyckoff: Yes, it was done then.

Jarrell: And that's the kind of thing that I would like you to comment on . . .

Wyckoff: Of course the really hard part is to implement something like a program on health insurance unless you have built in a vast knowledge of how to work with the legislature. And frankly, this was . . . it's the same, it was the same kind of [difficulty] that Jimmy Carter's going to have.

Jarrell: Which he doesn't yet know.

Wyckoff: No, he doesn't know yet. But it's this business of building all those channels of communication to the legislature . . . if you didn't have support there, that's where the thing broke down. He [Olson] did surround himself with some good advisers who were fine people but who didn't have the knowledge of the relationship of the legislature that might have been very helpful to him. They were people of integrity, and they were brighter than he, and able to keep the general direction going. But they didn't understand the true nature of the horsetrading that has to go on to make something happen in our society. Idealistic people go in with a beautiful dream that they just lay out, and they have no idea that there's this terrific amount of horsetrading that has to go on before you come up with something that is a compromise. And you hope it's a step in the direction of what you want. But . . . oh, this was a tough business. If I had known then what I learned later on in Congress, working, lobbying on the [Capitol] Hill there, I think I would have been far more helpful. As it was, I was just blindly going ahead thinking that our shining integrity and great purpose was going to win somehow. Well, we did have a few people who knew how to horsetrade, to do these things. And Assemblyman Elmer Lore was one of them. He understood the mechanism of the legislature. That's what you had to have, but we had so few like that who wouldn't sell out, but who knew where you had to compromise to get things. And he did a great deal to help educate the governor's staff and executive branch to the realities of life, and how you have to move and take what you can get. You had all these hungry people [during the Depression], you know; there they were, you know, just helpless. Somebody, somebody had to do something for them, or there was going to be . . . we were awfully close to a total breakdown really. It was a really dangerous situation then. But it was all over the country. The Roosevelt administration of course . . . it was very lucky that we had that. I don't know what would have happened if we hadn't had a President who had the capacity to lift us up out of a horrible situation.

Jarrell: To step in.



**Wyckoff:** Yes. And the federal agencies throughout California did a great deal to help us get over the naiveté of this early, sudden accession to power. I think the federal agencies here . . . their staffs were really fine people. And . . . there were some that were a little bit . . . well, not as imaginative as they might have been. But . . . well they had for example, Captain Edward Macauley, an old Navy man, as head of Federal Public Works Administration. Federal Public Works was a relief type program, one that was intended to stimulate jobs. And what they wanted more than anything else was a person of absolute integrity there because, because it was very easy to get into trouble with that amount of money, doing the things they were doing. And I know that one of the reasons Eddie was made head of that was because Roosevelt had personal knowledge of his integrity.

### THE WAR YEARS: CONTINUING THE CRUSADE FOR IMPROVING THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF MIGRANT WORKERS

**Jarrell:** One topic that's been in our interview outline which we've never talked about, and I know it's a thread that goes for many years in your activities, is the National Consumer League.

**Wyckoff:** Yes.

#### The National Consumers League and Agricultural Labor Issues

**Jarrell:** I would like, if you could trace the origins of your own interest and participation in the National Consumers League . . . I know it became more important when you moved to Washington, D.C.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. Well, first of all, you have to understand that the whole title of the League was The National Consumers League for Fair Labor Standards. It was not a consumer organization in the sense that it was intended only to benefit consumers as such.

**Jarrell:** Not as we think of it now in terms of consumer action.

**Wyckoff:** No. Now they have changed it and it has become a consumer organization caring more about consumers. Originally it was intended to be a general citizens group outside the labor movement composed of consumers who wanted to see that the products they bought were made under decent conditions. In the very early days of the formation of it, Eleanor Roosevelt and Florence Kelley, and various people back East were very much concerned with the horrible conditions under which garments were made particularly.





And there was a famous incident of the Triangle [Shirtwaist] Fire<sup>14</sup> . . . it was a kind of a landmark and created really the feeling that there must be some organization of this sort. Well, a lot of very distinguished people were drawn to the National Consumers League and they have had a long and constructive career.

**Jarrell:** Frances Perkins, for instance was very instrumental in the National Consumers League.

**Wyckoff:** Oh yes, she was a member of it.

**Jarrell:** She would have been a generation before you, at least.

**Wyckoff:** Oh yes, yes. She was, of course, the Secretary of Labor while we were in Washington [D.C.].

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** But she was an early and very ardent member of the National Consumers League long before that. The League was not strong in California. People like Barbara Armstrong and Mary Hutchinson, and . . . I think Emily Huntington belonged to it . . . and . . . well, a number of people down south. There was a membership of about maybe twenty-five or thirty here. They met occasionally and they would testify [before legislative committees]. That's what they mainly did. I was asked to join. I testified as the League spokesman, you know, for the California minimum wage, I remember. I found my testimony in the file upstairs. It's really interesting to think that it was that far back. Because I hadn't ever met the great lady who was then head of the League—Elizabeth Magee—at that time. She succeeded Mary Dublin who subsequently became Mrs. Leon Keyserling.

**Jarrell:** Oh yes.

**Wyckoff:** The League did several things. They presented really important *amicus curiae* briefs in all of the major judicial battles about labor legislation. Lawyers such as Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter wrote some of them. Particularly where it came to women and children. Child labor was an awfully important part of their concern. They worked a great deal on the whole question of women and children because that was the cheapest labor.

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<sup>14</sup> The Triangle Shirtwaist Company suffered a devastating fire on March 25, 1911, in which 147 women and children workers were killed. This disaster galvanized public opinion, enabling the labor movement to achieve substantial reforms for worker safety in establishing factory building and fire codes—Editor.



Jarrell: Right. The most exploited.

Wyckoff: The most exploited. They did a great deal in trying to alleviate these conditions and of course we felt it was extremely pertinent out here. I felt that it was extremely pertinent to pay attention to the conditions in agriculture. They played an important role in passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: In San Francisco it started originally as a garment workers movement. And we had Jenny Matyas, head of the ILGWU (International Ladies Garment Workers Union) here in California, and she wanted it of course to continue to help the garment workers . . . but . . .

Jarrell: Do you mean limited to that?

Wyckoff: Yes. Well she thought of it as an urban worker's friend. In fact, she really never was interested in what happened to the agricultural workers. She was completely a city person. Well . . . as you know, I got more and more interested in the conditions in agricultural labor. When I went back East during the war, they put me on the League Board in 1941; I was on the National Board finally; I guess because I gave some testimony, I don't know why. I became a member of the National Board and I went to meetings in New York where they were always held. The office was in New York, and not in Washington [D.C.].

It was a very imposing body, I want to tell you. I was about 20 years younger than anybody else on the board.

Jarrell: (Laughter) They were old hands.

Wyckoff: Yes, and I was looked upon as a kind of a pet 'coon and they all were very solicitous of me and trying to educate me and give me some background. I had to learn who the great people were, those before whom you should bow down and be very respectful. I learned a great deal about this incredible old organization back East. But in a small voice, I began to raise the issue of agricultural labor back there. And I got their attention . . . enough, so that they actually did give some money for a study of agricultural labor in New York. And that was a first step.

Then a very interesting thing happened as a result of the impact of the studies they began to make on agricultural labor in New York. An old lady named Florina Lasker who was a member of the Board, died. She left a fortune, which was substantial, to the National Consumers League and paid the tax on it . . . for the purpose of setting up a lobbying office in Washington, D.C., for



the League to work for the inclusion of agricultural workers under Social Security. And she paid for it and it succeeded.

Jarrell: Oh my goodness.

Wyckoff: Isn't that wonderful? So Elizabeth Magee moved her office to Washington, D.C., and she started in. She was not a lobbyist by nature. It was hard for her to do this. But there were other members of the Board and the League who were able to rally around and help. The League existed by donations and under the Hatch Act and under the various laws covering tax exemption . . . you could not use tax-exempt money to lobby.

Jarrell: Yes. A non-profit tax-exempt organization may not use its money to lobby.

Wyckoff: Nobody wanted to give money to anything unless it was tax-exempt so they could get the exemption. But Florina did exactly the opposite; she paid the tax and gave the money.

Jarrell: So there were no strings attached.

Wyckoff: Yes, well . . . this was something. At that time, they'd decided they had to create another body which would be tax-exempt and could receive tax-exempt funds for other research studies and things of this sort. So they set up the Consumers' Committee for Research and Education, and I'm on the Board of that. That is a little foundation. And they published my first little book on migrant health in 1955.<sup>15</sup> That one I showed you. It is still requested; I still get letters from people from all over; from Florida I just got a letter asking for some more copies. They want to know how you start to solve a social problem in an agricultural community. And this is a story of how to begin. So they're still selling it. I'm delighted to find out.

Jarrell: But, getting back to the research committee—it was that funded research which was so vital before you could have any lobbying effort for legislation.

Wyckoff: Yes. Absolutely. That's right. So there were the two things put together.

Jarrell: I would like to ask you as long as we're starting at the beginning . . . for once (laughter) . . . Why have I gotten that impression that it is a women's organization?

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<sup>15</sup>*Health Projects for Migrant Farm Families: California's Experience*, Washington D.C., National Consumers Committee for Research and Education, 1963—Editor.



**Wyckoff:** Because there were women in industries that, under the Fair Labor Standards Act, were the ones that most people were working to protect. But there were lawyers like Stephen Rauschen, Felix Frankfurter, William Leiserson, Louis Brandeis . . . and oh, I don't know, there were dozens of lawyers who were members of the League who were men who worked very hard to help with the *amicus curiae* work.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** The treasurer was a man, Nicholas Kelley. In the days of the war the chairman was Dr. John Lathrop of Brooklyn, N.Y. I don't think it was feminine-oriented. The executive secretary was always a woman as I recall.

**Jarrell:** When I was reading Frances Perkins' biography, a recent one, the author documented the activities of the NCL in New York State during the governorship of Al Smith. He told the story of how eventually you did get the child labor situation remedied after many, many years of constant struggle.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. Oh yes.

**Jarrell:** Because we're talking from about 1912 all the way up.

**Wyckoff:** They were very active in 1911 and '12 at the time of Governor Hiram Johnson in California.

**Jarrell:** Yes. But for some reason I've always associated the NCL somehow with women who were well-born and who had a serious, very strong commitment to social justice and to improving working conditions.

**Wyckoff:** That's true.

**Jarrell:** And I do not see it as having a partisan slant . . .

**Wyckoff:** No.

**Jarrell:** . . . nor do I see it as connecting up with the ideological struggles of the 30s in terms of socialists, and communists.

**Wyckoff:** No.

**Jarrell:** It's something quite apart. A strain apart.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. Yes, that's right.





Jarrell: Is that accurate, do you think?

Wyckoff: Yes. I think so. It never seemed to be captured by any particular political group. It always was careful, I think, to keep its base as broad as possible. When it started, naturally it was involved with people like Dubinsky and Hillman, heads of the garment workers unions. But I wouldn't think you could say it was a socialist organization particularly, or any . . . it didn't have any special political cast to it. It was out there to work on the issue of fair labor standards, whatever it took to do it. Even though it was small and only had a few state chapters that were vigorous . . . a very vigorous one in New Jersey . . . and one in New York, were enormously strong in the League activities; Ohio was where Miss Magee originally came from, and Ohio became also a very strong state. California was never particularly strong, but it had some influence, I think. People such as Emily Huntington, for example, and that whole development of the Heller Budget. That was all tied in, you know, with what the League was doing.

#### Women's Joint Congressional Committee

Wyckoff: The League also had one position that was very effective. It had a delegate on the Women's Joint Congressional Committee. And that organization was one of the most interesting ones that I ever came in contact with.

Jarrell: Now this is also later on when you moved to Washington?

Wyckoff: Yes. Well you wanted me to talk about the League and I'm following this thread of the League.

Jarrell: Yes, that's right.

Wyckoff: I was asked to take on the job of being the delegate for the League to the Women's Joint Congressional Committee. Now that organization may still be in existence, I don't know. It was active for a great many years, but certainly during the war years when I was there it was very active. It had been active, I know, for a number of years before that. It consisted of the largest organizations in the country that had their national policy set by a membership convention, you might say. It was composed of the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women, the National Council of Parents and Teachers, the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Council of Negro Women, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Home Economics Association . . . well, about twenty-five or thirty organizations. I can't remember all of them. They had some curious differences about the admission of some organizations, I remember. One was the CIO and one was the National Council of Catholic Women. The reasons that those two were suspect for quite a while was that it



was determined that their policies were not set by a democratic procedure or a convention of members, but were handed down from on high to them. They were told what their policy should be by a higher body. It was very curious that they lumped the CIO with the Catholics. Because they felt that the Pope was telling the Catholics what they should believe and . . .

**Jarrell:** And who was telling the CIO, in the opinion of the Committee?

**Wyckoff:** The CIO . . . well, this was the question. This is in the early days. Now it was either . . . I don't know if it was John Lewis or Phil Murray<sup>16</sup> or who, but somebody on top, some group on top was telling the members. They did not set their policies at a convention. I don't know whether they suspected them of being communist-dominated or what. But they were suspect. The AFL was not suspect, but the CIO [was] . . . in the early days [before the two affiliated].

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** There was a lot of friction about that. Well finally they admitted the CIO. But they studied their bylaws and did all kinds of things before they let them in.

The Women's Joint Congressional Committee function was very interesting to me. These were organizations that were enormously jealous of their status, and did not ever want anyone to speak in the name of the Women's Joint Congressional Committee . . . never. There was no letterhead.

**Jarrell:** Really?

**Wyckoff:** There was no way in which you could possibly use that group as a front for anything. What they did was have a meeting of organization delegates once or twice a month at which they would have a series of topics that were agreed upon such as the Food and Drug Law. They would bring in all the experts they could find to talk on the subject; they'd bring in government experts or they'd bring in legislators, they'd bring in whoever they wanted. They would cross-examine them on the subject of this law. Members would have studied it hard in advance. Then they would ask for a

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<sup>16</sup> John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers, spearheaded the drive for industrial union organization in the face of the American Federation of Labor's entrenched craft union opposition, which resulted in the establishment of the Committee for Industrial Organization [CIO] in 1935-36 and the eventual unionization of basic industries during the 1930s. The emergence of the radical CIO engendered red-baiting attacks from both the AF of L and from manufacturers and employers. Lewis appointed Philip Murray, vice-president of the UMW, as chairman of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. CIO involvement elicited suspicion among other progressive-minded groups of communist-domination or influence—Editor.



show of hands of how many organizations wanted to work legislatively on this particular measure.

Jarrell: In terms of a lobbying effort, do you mean?

Wyckoff: Yes. There would be some hands that would go up that meant we will work on the Food and Drug Act; we will work on this particular legislation and we have authorization from our membership to do so. And so the chairman would simply say, "All right. You go off in a corner and form an ad hoc committee and you'll decide how you're going to work together." So they would go off and form a group. Then that group would sit down and they'd say, "Now we will divide up the Congress. And each of us will take certain areas, certain legislators, or certain topics. And this way, we can cover all the bases." No one was ever to write a letter to a congressman except on his own letterhead. This way you never ran into any difficulty. In other words, instead of getting one letter from the Women's Joint Congressional Committee, a congressman got 25 letters on 25 letterheads from all the organizations who had agreed that they would write, that they would support this legislation. The impact was very much greater as a result.

The thing that was so exciting to me was . . . major decisions are made in those committees of Congress, and there are key people in those committees. They have a constituency at home. The Women's Joint Congressional Committee would analyze an issue so carefully that they knew exactly what the pressures were at home on this particular person. Now they all had membership in those little communities wherever they were. They could reach in and for the cost of a few phone calls they could really get plenty of action at the right moment.

Jarrell: To put the pressure on that legislator?

Wyckoff: To put the pressure on that legislator at that moment. I forgot about the Methodist women. They were the greatest bunch I'd ever known.

Jarrell: They were part of this.

Wyckoff: Yes . . . it was the Women's Christian Temperance Union movement, but they were called the Women's Division of the Methodist Church South. Well, they were unbelievable. They were southern magnolias in front . . .

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Wyckoff: . . . and they were, they were real crusaders behind. Whew! That darling old lady had an instinct for knowing when these things were coming up, and she was able to do the kind of thing that evidently made a very



important dent on the legislator. She would throw him out of bed at six o'clock in the morning on a day that a vote was coming up, and she would say, "Now, honey chile, I just want you to know that we're watching you today." (Laughter) It was really wonderful.

Jarrell: What particular legislation would a woman like Mrs. Tilley be interested in?

Wyckoff: Farm Security.

Jarrell: Okay.

Wyckoff: Oh, the survival of Farm Security, I think, lasted at least two or three years longer because of her alone.

Jarrell: Really.

Wyckoff: You see, in those days, those southern senators-Congressmen had great seniority. They dominated the committees of the Congress. And if it hadn't been for women like Mrs. Tilley from the South who knew how to deliver the vote at the polls at home . . . the Congress might have acted quite differently! The WJCC was composed of these massive organizations that could act. The PTA, the church women . . . and those church women, they're vigorous. They could actually make a difference at the polls because of the grapevine they had through other organizations. And these legislators knew it. So this wasn't just silly talk at all, not at all.

Jarrell: No, no.

Wyckoff: This was the kind of thing that really meant the difference between victory and defeat for them.

Jarrell: So if it meant for the legislators that they had to bite the bullet and support this terrible FSA for another term . . .

Wyckoff: They knew. Yes. Yes. They did.

Jarrell: They knew that they would maintain their office if they gave in on some things.

Wyckoff: That's right. Well, these people were enormously effective because they understood how to deliver the vote and they knew timing. They never wasted the effort. They knew exactly when the vote was coming in. They were well informed . . . and this is where the Women's Joint Congressional Committee was so good. They had a bunch of really smart cookies in Washington who studied the calendar of every committee, knew all the staff





people, and they were in constant communication on the legislation and never allowed anything to slip. They were good lobbyists, very good. And they were all unpaid volunteers, lobbyists really.

Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: The National Consumers League just happened to be one of them. And that's where I think I got my training on . . .

Jarrell: So you were the liaison between the National Consumers League and this committee?

Wyckoff: Yes.

Jarrell: Now one thing I don't quite understand about it. You said they had no letterhead . . . that if a letter was written . . . say you wrote a letter to a legislator, you would sign it . . .

Wyckoff: It went on a National Consumer's League stationery.

Jarrell: All right. I see. So each person would represent, would be affiliated with their own parent organization.

Wyckoff: That's right.

Jarrell: So was there anything on paper about this committee?

Wyckoff: There was a set of bylaws.

Jarrell: That was it? They didn't have a newsletter, for instance, that they sent out.

Wyckoff: No.

Jarrell: Nothing like that?

Wyckoff: Oh nothing. No.

Jarrell: Was it very well known in terms of public knowledge? I mean, it was not that you were trying to keep it a secret . . .

Wyckoff: It was very much feared.

Jarrell: Among the legislators? They all knew it.



**Wyckoff:** Yes. But there were never any news releases issued of any kind about it at all. No, no.

**Jarrell:** I see. So I get the notion of what this organization was about then. It's very specifically directed?

**Wyckoff:** Well, it was, it was a clearinghouse is what it was. It was a very efficient and well-informed clearinghouse on certain types of legislation. And most of the legislation was fair labor standards or food and drug or any kind of thing that would help consumers . . . they took interest in a great deal of labor legislation; they fostered protective legislation of all kinds. There were certain things that some people would back out of. And that's why this clearinghouse was so good. The WJCC could . . . not fall apart because one member couldn't swallow something, or didn't back something . . . the League of Women Voters is slow-moving. They won't take a position unless the entire body has studied and okayed it. So frequently where the League of Women Voters delegate would have been very much in favor of something, she couldn't do anything unless she went running back home and got it cleared. Well, you know, this is the way some huge organizations go. It is important to have the membership understand what they're doing; you want the kind of support you get from that; so it's a slow, long process. And so, WJCC had to be very respectful with each other to build on a base like that. But I thought it was a great organization. Of course later on some of the lobbyists in the big trade associations caught on to the technique and began to fight some of the legislation that the Women's Joint Committee were working on . . . in the same way.

**Jarrell:** I see.

**Wyckoff:** The National Railroad Association was one. They knew about how you call that legislator at a certain time and a certain place, but they might have had the money to make the difference, but they didn't have the votes. It was crucial. And if you had the labor movement and the massive vote and had it informed enough on these things, even though the information frequently took a long time to trickle down, still the grapevine worked very well. The impact was felt at the polls. Then that was just the way, the only way, that you could hope to be effective. I think we were simpler in those days. You have to think in terms of some of these things being sharply focused and easy to grasp: child labor, or the Food and Drug Act's control of things like . . . well dirty butter, I remember, was a very dramatic issue at one time in trying to get control. Now the dairymen fought like mad over this thing. But you put out of the grapevine a specific example of dirty butter with flies' legs in it and all sorts of things. You know that gets around fast.

**Jarrell:** There's an immediacy to it.



**Wyckoff:** Yes. These were things that were very simple to grasp and not so difficult. But where you're scattering your shots all over a thousand subjects and foreign policy and everything else, it's a very difficult thing.

**Jarrell:** That's a very good explanation. The issues were more immediately grasped; they had more to do with people's everyday experience in a sense. We're talking about what we consider the most basic humane kind of legislation as we look at it thirty years later, let's say.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. It wasn't as difficult then as it is now, okay. Well, I don't know whether things have changed all that much really. But I felt that the National Consumers League and the Women's Joint Congressional Committee made a great contribution to the progress we've had in all kinds of social legislation. Legislators were pleased to be asked to come and address them, you know. This was all done without publicity.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** And usually they don't want to do anything unless there's publicity. Senator Taft<sup>17</sup> came a number of times and talked on the subject of housing. I remember that very well because he was a very distinguished member of Congress at that time. He came and was ready to answer questions and he even came without staff . . . and this is the kind of thing that showed there was a lot of respect for the organization by the members of Congress, who didn't think that there was anything phony about it at all. It had a good reputation. Well, about the League, the National Consumers League . . . they encouraged me to go ahead and write this little pamphlet which you have seen on the history of migrant health. It was a social study really. The request I got was to present it as a paper before the 1955 National Conference of Social Welfare; Miss Magee was on the Board of the NCSW. They felt that something rural ought to be presented to this urban-oriented body. The National Council of Social Welfare . . . was a very elite organization of social workers. Of course I felt like a fish out of water, but Miss Magee really believed that the agricultural labor problem was one that ought to be understood by city people. So in 1955, I gave this paper as a layman at the National Conference of Social Welfare which was held in San Francisco. It was published in the proceedings of the National Conference of Social Welfare which is published by Columbia University. You know, that's their routine publication for all papers; their School of Social Work printed it. But Miss Magee said, "Nobody'll ever find it there. It ought to be used as a working paper for people. So rewrite it, expand it, add on the later effects of it, and we'll publish it." So there was the early edition that was done up till

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<sup>17</sup>Senator Robert Taft (Republican; Ohio) was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1938, where he served until his death on January 31, 1953—Editor.



about 1955 . . . well, I don't know what the dates are, I'll have to go and look—1955, I guess . . . and then there was a later edition that carried the story further on to 1963 because there was always more progress.

**Jarrell:** Yes. But you had been working on this for ten years?

**Wyckoff:** Yes.

**Jarrell:** Before this paper . . . I'd say for about maybe fifteen years, you'd been involved and thinking and working.

**Wyckoff:** Well . . . yes, yes. So this piece was a kind of culmination of the California story.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** And so The National Consumers Committee for Research and Education Foundation published that. They still distribute it. So that's the thread of the National Consumers League as far as I'm concerned.

**Jarrell:** Well, I think that's excellent. I think we should stop right now.

### La Follette Committee

**Wyckoff:** Well, there is just one thing. I would like to know . . . how far do you think we ought to go today?

**Jarrell:** Okay. We have roughly two hours, and what I have on our agenda is to continue on about the agricultural situation in California, the La Follette Committee hearings<sup>18</sup>. . .

**Wyckoff:** Yes. As well as the Arvin-Dinuba<sup>19</sup> study and the meaning of it.

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<sup>18</sup>Robert M. La Follette, Jr. (Democrat; Wisconsin) served in the U.S. Senate from 1925-1949. From 1936-1939, La Follette was a member of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor. The subcommittee on Senate Resolution 266, widely known as the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee (chaired by La Follette) conducted extensive hearings in California during 1939-40, investigating violations of civil liberties, labor-management relations and related matters in agricultural and industrial labor, concentrating on management violations of labor rights under the National Industrial Recovery Act and the National Labor Relations Act—Editor.

<sup>19</sup>Wyckoff refers here to Walter Goldschmidt's *As You Sow* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1947) a comparative community study of three rural towns in California's Central Valley, Wasco, Arvin, and Dinuba, in which he lived and carried out his investigations during 1941 and 1944. Goldschmidt concluded that there is a causative relationship between industrialized agriculture and the urbanization of rural society—Editor.





Jarrell: That's right.

Wyckoff: And all of the things that went along with that. And then getting up to the point where the President's committee was formed and the rest of it.

Jarrell: Because we've talked extensively, I think, for the last three tapes . . .

Wyckoff: On the thirties. Yes. And this is more of the same.

Jarrell: Yes. If you would like to give your historical prelude.

Wyckoff: Yes. Well, you have to think of the La Follette Committee as being a rather continuing thing. Its activities really went on from 1935 to 1939, actually. One of the purposes of the investigation was to examine a range of employer-employee relationships, primarily in agriculture, to which Congress had not extended any guarantees of collective bargaining or prohibitions of unfair or oppressive labor practices . . . as for example under the National Labor Relations Act which was passed in 1935. The assumption of the committee was that free association and self-organization are guaranteed under the constitutional rights of free speech and assembly. Even though the National Labor Relations Act passed in 1935, it was two years before the courts declared it constitutional, and finally guaranteed the right of collective bargaining in 1937. But California employers led the fight aggressively against it with obstructionist tactics, industrial espionage, and propaganda. Farm workers were expressly exempted in tradeoffs in Congress to buy the votes to pass the National Labor Relations Act, mainly to get the cotton states, the old South, whose members dominated many committees of Congress due to their long seniority. However, the La Follette Committee felt that the farm workers had fundamental constitutional rights and wished to investigate whether they had been violated. Henry Fowler, the gifted chief counsel for the committee, wrote the final report in restrained and senatorial language. The conclusion of the investigation in California found and here is his language:

Employment relations in California's industrialized agriculture have been left in the unfettered control of employers' groups and associations. The results detailed in this report are almost beyond belief. Unemployment, underemployment, disorganized, haphazard migrancy; lack of adequate wages or annual income; bad housing; insufficient education; little medical care; the great public burden of relief and the denial of civil liberties; riots, strife, [and] corruption are all part and parcel of this autocratic system of labor relations that has for decades dominated California's agricultural industry. In this respect California provides a clear demonstration that in an industrial



society the stronger side of the employment relations cannot be permitted to devise policies and conduct affairs solely in accord with its own wishes. Such so-called laissez-faire constitutes too great a danger to the public welfare; too great a drain on the public purse, and too great an injury to the entire fabric of democratic rights.

Then again he said,

The climax of world-wide adjustment to mass industrial machine age is here. The equitable distribution of the products of collective enterprise that mean life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in the economic sense [inaudible] be achieved without the destruction of the liberty and enterprise of private citizens and association. The alternatives are either internal decay or the tyranny of small groups vested with great power; that is the vast and fearsome prospect in the light of which all policies of government must be viewed. Our objectives must continue to further a balanced system of collective bargaining between those who own or control production property and those who work it. Only by diligent adherence to that public policy will it be possible to achieve order, efficiency, and economic justice free from the tyranny of the totalitarian state.<sup>20</sup>

How do you like that . . . wasn't he wonderful? He was a very eloquent man. The La Follette Committee found in important sectors of California industry, that the National Labor Relations Board had *not* been honored. The results were observed in repeated denials of labor's rights. In part the causes lay in organized conspiracies of employers associated to flout the law, deliberately to flout the law. Such as interference with the right of labor to organize and bargain perpetrated by organized employers' associations and their artificially generated citizen's committees and third-party movements. Such conspiracies should be flatly outlawed. Now that was a recommendation of the La Follette Committee as a result of this exposure. The Committee felt that public understanding of the belligerent employers attempts to sway public opinion was a necessary safeguard. Paul Eliel, counsel for the San Francisco Industrial Association, wrote a long analysis of the '34 [San Francisco General] strike which he termed "a failure." Note that his bread was buttered (laughter) by this. But the La Follette investigation found the 1934 strike a great success. "It was an overwhelming defeat for the industrial association. It antagonized the entire city, a dominant factor in uniting labor to the unusual degree necessary for an effective general strike." I thought that was an interesting point we ought to get in.

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<sup>20</sup> We have been unable to provide a citation for Wyckoff's quotation from Henry Fowler's statement to the committee—Editor.



Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: I'm just putting in little points now. Incidentally during the '34 strike, George Hedley, who was head of the Pacific Coast School for Workers, was right down there on the docks facing the National Guard every day. And right after that he was defrocked by the Methodist Church for smoking. (Laughter) I thought that was so funny. They didn't want to say that it was for his other activities, but for smoking. He was a chain smoker, and they disapproved of that.

My circle of friends in the labor movement and in the Theater Union, in the YWCA Industrial Department, and in the Democratic Party all felt that we were preparing for a major change in our state government after 44 years of Republican administration. We were consciously or not gearing up for a hard drive to overturn the Merriam Administration. The Roosevelt forces were with us in Congress and in the executive agencies and the La Follette investigation was part of it. The La Follette Committee was an active force from 1937 on even though the Congressional report was never finally printed until 1942<sup>21</sup> after the war broke out. But the studies of labor policies from 1935 to '39 had a major impact on the public.

### Henry Fowler

Wyckoff: My role in this whole affair was very minor. All the information gathered for Senator Olson in his campaign for Governor during the years '36, '37, and '38 was turned over to the La Follette Investigating Committee. Members of our committees were often witnesses before the Congressional Committee. I personally introduced Henry Fowler to many of our members and took him and his staff members to the [Central] Valley to interview possible witnesses. Henry was a former union man, a railroad employee, he worked his way through law school. I seem to remember that it was in Virginia that he worked as a railroad man. He had a keen understanding of the significance of the whole labor movement in a democratic society, and he never lost sight of it.

Jarrell: The war swept these concerns away, distracted people obviously, so that the immediate concerns that you had had as a participant in the Olson Administration—there was no real action that could be taken at that point. Now certainly the gains in terms of labor generally were carried out during the war in organized labor.

Wyckoff: Enormously. Yes, yes.

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<sup>21</sup> The La Follette Committee Hearings were published in 1940—Editor.



**Jarrell:** However, agricultural workers were not covered: what was the fate of agricultural labor during the war in California?

**Wyckoff:** Well of course what happened was a great many of the people left the fields and went into the shipyards.

**Jarrell:** Into war industries.

### The Bracero Program: Public Law 78

**Wyckoff:** They went into war industries and it was at that point that they [the growers] were trying to, of course, get their farm labor in from Mexico to fill up the empty spaces.

**Jarrell:** So you had a real transition in the whole makeup of that labor force?

**Wyckoff:** Oh yes. Exactly. Yes, it was changed. I knew many of the families that worked, that lived in the old Farm Security camps, and that were part of the migrant stream, you might say. They left and went into the war industries. This created a totally different kind of a situation. This gave an opportunity to the employers of course to get a law through which would enable them to set up Public Law 78 which was the Bracero Program<sup>22</sup> and completely changed the whole agricultural scene from . . . well, the Bracero program was almost like a military operation. You had a central camp, and a contractor who would get phone call from a grower saying, "send me seventy-five men." And the grower would get the seventy-five men right on the spot and they would all be in good physical shape, had had their health examinations . . . They would have been fed; they would have been housed; they would have been cared for. They had no wives here, no children here, nobody hanging on them in any way. They were just delivered, just the way you'd deliver troops. It was a real military operation. And of course it was supposed to be very temporary.

**Wyckoff:** And very . . . well . . . carefully controlled. Actually the treaty that was made to cover the care of those was negotiated partly by Dr. Dunahoo

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<sup>22</sup> The various arrangements by which Mexican agricultural labor has been imported into the U.S. have an extensive legislative history. The antecedents to the Bracero Program date back to numerous U.S. Government agreements with Mexico in 1942, 1943, and 1945, for the importation of Mexicans to the U.S. for temporary farm work due to domestic labor shortages. Public Law 78, the Bracero Program, was signed into law on July 12, 1951, and expired on December 31, 1964, amidst criticism from church, labor, and social welfare organizations that the contract labor system was dehumanizing and undermined American workers' wages and working conditions—Editor.





who was our health officer and at that time was down on the border. He negotiated a lot of the health insurance features of the treaty.

The way it worked was. . . it was called the Continental Insurance Company. Anyway, the insurance was a flat coverage for each worker and an insurance doctor was picked in almost every town and then if the men needed any care he would go to this doctor and receive the care under the insurance coverage, free. But if he was seriously ill, he was simply shipped back to Mexico, and nothing happened.

Jarrell: They of course wanted basically healthy people?

Wyckoff: Yes. Oh yes. Yes. The cream. Well it was quite a struggle to get Public Law 78 overturned because the small towns and cities saw right away that if each bracero came back with a family, they were going to have to make room in the schools for them; they were going to have to provide services . . . and they were afraid that they would go on welfare [during off-season] . . . there was all kinds of resistance to this. It took from the middle of the war till finally . . . I think it was not until 1964 that Congress got rid of the bracero program. Yes. Right now I think the growers would give anything to get back to it. You hear hints of it all the time and somebody's always introducing a bill to try to restore that system again. I think that things have not changed as much as we'd like to believe since the days of the La Follette Committee investigations. This system of using citizen committees as phony fronts for employer's [inaudible] .

### Worker Education

Even though we did get the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, much later [in California] why it hasn't solved the agricultural problem at all. Not at all. I think that those of us in those days trying to get back to the time where we were fully aware that the best thing that we could do to help the situation, to create this balance that the La Follette Committee was trying to encourage, was to train farm workers, agricultural workers, [about] how to form a union, how to operate a union, how to govern the union, how to negotiate, how to bargain, how to keep books, how to do all the [necessary] things. That was the reason that we supported this Pacific Coast School for Workers. My father<sup>23</sup> was the head of the [UC] Extension Division.

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<sup>23</sup>Leon J. Richardson [1868-1965] was founder of University of California Extension. See his oral history memoirs, *Berkeley Culture, University of California Highlights and Univeristy Extension, 1892-1960.*, (Berkeley: Regional Oral History Office, 1959), interviewed by Amelia Frye, 1959—Editor.



He was not a very outspoken radical to say the least. (Laughter) In fact he was a classical scholar and a rather shy one in some ways. Anyway he firmly believed that the solution [to these labor problems] was going to come through education of workers in how to conduct their own affairs, and I think he thoroughly believed in that. There were no strings attached to his work; he could do what he felt was wise in spite of these kinds of propaganda . . . in those days *everybody* who tried to help do *anything* for the workers was called a communist. They were called "reds." They were called "anarchists", they were called everything under the sun. They just got smeared. For some reason or other my father was never the least bit afraid of that. I don't think anybody ever did call him a communist, yet he supplied quite a few of the faculty members for the Pacific Coast School for Workers. The study of labor relations was not then a part of the [regular] University academic [program].

Jarrell: That's right.

Wyckoff: In fact the study of labor relations didn't get into the academic part of the University for a long time. It took a great deal of pushing in terms of setting up a department of Industrial Relations . . .

Jarrell: Oh, I see.

Wyckoff: They just wouldn't face it. They were scared stiff of it. They wouldn't do anything like that. They wouldn't even have labor management courses; they wouldn't even have anything to do. You could take economics and get a little of it on the side there.

Jarrell: It took until after the war to legitimize the whole idea.

Wyckoff: Yes. The idea of collective bargaining . . . it's true. It did.

Jarrell: That's right. You had schools all over the country springing up after World War II.

Wyckoff: Right. Yes.

Jarrell: Schools of industrial relations and labor/management studies.

Wyckoff: That's right. Well, I don't think people nowadays realize how terribly bad the conditions were then. I think the La Follette Committee revealed a great deal to the urban population about what was going on in the rural areas. I don't think they realized that the wages were fifteen cents an hour. And that the take-home . . . well, four or five hundred dollars a year income was average for so many of them, you know. It was so little. Also, people didn't understand that migrant workers only got about a hundred, maybe a hundred and twenty days work a whole year. Then, there was very



low pay. You couldn't stretch it out. It was a very expensive life. Because they travelled from place to place looking for work. The whole thing was just a scandalous business. It's still going on. We haven't solved it. I sometimes wonder what I've been doing all these years. When I hear what [recently] happened in Florida in Lake Okeechobee and those poor agricultural workers down there . . . they have no status as welfare recipients at all in this disaster because the state of Florida refuses to recognize them as residents. The state says, "Well, you go up to New York and pick apples up there; therefore you're not a resident here." Well it's just criminal; our system is just designed to cut them out.

**Jarrell:** But in another sense now, if you look in California, there is a public subsidy of this labor force so that when they are needed, they're paid a minimal wage by the growers. The rest of the year, when they're not needed, they're on a dole as they used to call it . . . I mean they're on welfare or whatever . . . so it's like these various communities through the federal government and state where the monies come from, are really very poorly subsidizing their labor force, in a sense.

**Wyckoff:** Subsidizing the grower.

**Jarrell:** Now were you aware of this? Or was this a common perception of this relationship in the period before the war?

**Wyckoff:** Oh yes. I think we were fully aware that the Farm Security was subsidizing the housing for the farm workers which was a subsidy to the growers.

**Jarrell:** Right. Indirectly . . . to the growers

**Wyckoff:** All the growers hate that word "subsidy" . . . when you use that word they hit the ceiling, because it gets under their skin. Because they know it's true. It is a subsidy, a very definite one. And welfare is a subsidy for them. No question about it. So society pays the special costs for their labor . . . due to their lack of paying proper wages. . . there's no doubt about it. We're just lining their pockets by doing it. It's a very false economic basis. Somehow or other, we manage to struggle along doing it, but those migrant farm workers suffer so, that it's really a crime.

Well, the witnesses before La Follette Committee brought out the story, I think for the first time, very clearly. I think it created a sentiment that has been growing ever since. The big associations of growers like the Associated Farmers came and went, but the combinations that were exposed in the La Follette Committee of cross-connections between the banks and the land companies and the growers . . . And the industrialists still exist . . . all subsidizing court suits to try to break the National Labor Relations Act or any other fair labor standards act . . .



The Social Security Act . . . they fought all three of those right down to the wire, tooth and nail. So I think the La Follette Committee first revealed the reality of this agricultural situation. I know Governor Olson was so . . . he was a strange man. He was really shocked. He went before the committee and said, "I hope you people will remind everybody to look behind every lobbyist that comes into Congress." (He was talking to the Congressmen) "I hope you will look at these people that come in there when they *pretend* to represent the farmer. You'll find they don't represent the farmer. You'll find they represent the industrial association, they represent the banks, they represent the mining interest, they represent all kinds of people, oil, and all other interests that are ganging up to get a benefit of this and they want to weaken the labor law." And I think it was kind of a revelation to Olson, too.

Jarrell: Really.

Wyckoff: Yes, I really do. It revealed, these things revealed the cross-connections and . . . Hubert had lots of friends who had cross-connections in all of this, you know. I mean the bank presidents would be on the boards of directors of all these different organizations and it was, it was a kind of a revelation to everybody how things were going. And I think it awakened the community to a much newer sophistication of what was happening to them.

### WASHINGTON, D.C. YEARS

Wyckoff: The people involved in all that were of course friends of ours out here. Walter Goldschmidt's brother, Arthur Goldschmidt, was head of the power division of the Interior Department. And Abe Fortas was Undersecretary [of the Interior Department], I think, at one time. Anyway they were also great friends of ours so when we moved back to Washington, [D.C.] we moved right into the midst of all their lobbying activities, and I was working part-time for Food for Freedom which gave me a freewheeling base from which I could operate . . . So I had a very interesting time carrying on the causes that I had adopted out here. They were happy that I was a fresh face from the grassroots who could go up on the [Capitol] Hill and bring the message from back home. I enjoyed that very much. Even though the war broke out I didn't forget the basic needs.

Jarrell: A lot of people did though.

Wyckoff: Yes, a lot of people did. But . . . I think there was a group of us in Washington that sort of kept the flame alive. It was an interesting group of people. We used to meet regularly for lunch and just kind of check on the whole situation. One of our causes was to keep the Farm Security [Administration] alive.





Farm Security was a very valuable agency. I think it was started in the early thirties . . . just about that time. It hadn't had much impact, but was a good base from which social investigators could go and see rural conditions. Of course the growers were opposed to the Farm Security Administration because they felt that they had no control over the farm workers living in this neutral territory. Well, workers could organize on public property, and growers were afraid of that, and they didn't like it. So they wanted to stamp out those Farm Security camps.

Jarrell: They were enclaves where these people would be free to do what they wanted.

Wyckoff: That's right. Safe. Yes. I think the feeling still exists actually. The labor contractor's camps . . . there were camps on the grower's property, and there were county camps. There were all kinds of labor camps. But the Farm Security camps were the only federally-owned ones. They were about the best . . . they certainly weren't any great shakes, but they were the best. They had a clinic, they had a community organization, a building . . .

Jarrell: It was so fascinating when you told about the different kinds of houses.

Wyckoff: Yes.

Jarrell: And about the "arns" [irons].

Wyckoff: The "arns" (laughter). The rewards for improving their way of housekeeping. A farm worker could get a better house. Well now, let's see . . . I put down a few notes here thinking that you might possibly want them.

### The La Follette Committee Hearings: Labor Espionage and Red-baiting in Agriculture

Wyckoff: One of the extraordinary things that came out of that La Follette Committee, I think, was the revelation of the operation of the labor espionage system and the blacklisting, and how it worked. I think people had been unaware of the extent of it. There was a woman named Catherine Cree who was the espionage boss for the entire system, and maintained the central files for the Agricultural Labor Bureau, for the Western Growers Protective Association, for the Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association . . . everything . . . from the whole sweep of California. She was tracking down anybody who was an agitator of any kind, who showed any signs of making trouble. They would blacklist them and keep them out. The techniques, of course, of preventing labor organization are developed very highly in [the La Follette Committee] Report, so that . . . I don't know whether you want me to go into all that . . .



after all I would just be quoting from the La Follette Report and it's not necessary to do that.

There is one very interesting thing that [appeared at the time in] the *Monterey Peninsula Herald*. You know it wasn't often that you got a newspaper that would speak out against such practices. In Monterey there was such a paper, and I was very interested in this little editorial. Of course I didn't come down here to Watsonville very much; I was up in San Francisco, and I was only partly aware of what was going on down here. My main interest was over in the San Joaquin Valley, mainly, and not here, although Hubert's home was originally here [in the Pajaro Valley] and we came down here. Part of the reason for the activity over there was that there were Farm Security Camps there. It was possible to go from one to another to get a sort of an orientation as to who all the friendly citizens of the area were, what they were, who would give us information [in order] to counteract these citizen's committees the other groups had. That's what we were doing. But I thought this was fascinating. This is an editorial in 1935 in Monterey when they felt that the Vegetable Packers Association was trying to smash the Cannery Workers Union, you see.

There is a distinct danger that Monterey County may be made a battleground for industrial warfare. Not to settle any grievances or wrongs that are peculiar in this county at the present time, but to present part of the united front that a wild and woolly anti-union group of agitating shippers believe should be shown against organized labor in California. Lettuce shippers and speculators elsewhere in this state looked cynically upon the peace in Monterey County [and at] the strength of the fruit and vegetable workers union and the success that has so far greeted the county's industrial relations board. These outside influences that are in the game to break union labor in California agriculture want Monterey County in the same game too. If they can provoke strife and disorder here, they will do so. Unfortunately a few hotheads in this county listen to their counsel. They believe in loyalty to other shippers and speculators. They don't want either unions or industrial labor boards to tell them how to run their business. They want to write the rules, name the wages, say take it or leave it, and call any person who disagrees with these methods, radical educators, reds, and communists. That's the way it was done in the Imperial Valley. That's the way the gentlemen of Imperial Valley want it done here.

Isn't that interesting?



Jarrell: Yes, indeed. That's the way the growers in Imperial Valley wanted it done here?

Wyckoff: Wanted it done here in Monterey.

Jarrell: This is 1935?

Wyckoff: Yes.

Jarrell: That's quite extraordinary. To have a local newspaper coming out like that.

Wyckoff: Yes. To stick its neck out like that.

Jarrell: Oh, that's fantastic.

Wyckoff: Yes. (Laughter) I think it is. Well, it shows that there were voices of courage that were willing to speak up and say something. Allen Griffin was the editor I think. I'm not sure that he was then; he is now, but he may not have been editor then. But it's been a courageous paper for a long time. So is this one [newspaper] of ours, *The Watsonville Register-Pajaronian*. It's been a good one. It's not afraid to speak up.

Jarrell: That's right.

Wyckoff: The *Santa Cruz Sentinel* is the opposite, just the opposite.

### Washington, D.C.

Jarrell: Well, if you want then, we'll start with the war years, if that's all right.

Wyckoff: All right. That's fine. I'm ready. Anytime you want.

Jarrell: Now I know that when the war broke out . . . I know from Mr. Wyckoff's interview . . . was it Captain Edward Macauley who made the phone call to Mr. Wyckoff and offered him a position in Washington, D.C., as a Deputy Administrator in the War Shipping Administration.<sup>24</sup>

Wyckoff: Yes, in Washington [D.C.] right after Pearl Harbor.

Jarrell: So that you immediately just picked up and resettled?

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<sup>24</sup>Hubert C. Wyckoff Jr. served as Assistant Deputy Administrator for Maritime Labor Relations in the War Shipping Administration from 1942-1945—Editor.



**Wyckoff:** Yes . . . Did you hear about how we got in touch with the Macauleys?

**Jarrell:** No.

**Wyckoff:** Never did tell you how we became acquainted?

**Jarrell:** No. Well, he was a friend of Roosevelt's too, wasn't he?

**Wyckoff:** Yes. Well, I'll tell you . . . in the days of the YWCA, one of the groups that we were trying to organize, the most difficult group of all was the household employees. Nobody's ever organized them.

**Jarrell:** To this day.

**Wyckoff:** Well, there is an organization in Sacramento and down here in Santa Cruz County now . . . but it's mainly around the homemaker service rather than among domestic workers.

**Jarrell:** That's right.

**Wyckoff:** Which is a little different. This was an attempt to reach a group of people who just simply were so isolated and so defenseless that it seemed as though we could perhaps use some public opinion to get them better conditions if possible. Well, we called a meeting of employers and somebody brought Mrs. Macauley of all people to that meeting. She was a woman who was used to the former southern slave type of household employee, (laughter) . . . her father was a senator in Washington, you know, and she'd lived there . . . so it was perfectly astounding that she came [ to this meeting], but she did. Mainly because I think she was probably asked by the Roosevelts to keep an eye on any activities in the community and report back as to any burgeoning things that were going on. When we organized 22 unions this, I think, made her realize something was cooking. So any invitation she got from the YWCA she accepted. And she came to this meeting. I met her there and for some reason I started to work on her a little bit, and we became very good friends. She was very kind to us and cultivated us a lot and invited us many times to her big house down in Hillsborough, in San Mateo County.

### **Dinner with Eleanor Roosevelt**

**Wyckoff:** It was there that we went to dinner first with Mrs. Roosevelt. That was very interesting. This was during the La Follette days. Yes, that was really fascinating. Anyway we went with a group of people, I think Dewey Anderson was one. I think Milton Chernin was there. Anyway there were people from the State Relief Administration and from the Olson





Administration there. Of course you know Captain Eddie was head of the earliest works programs, not WPA, but the one before that. It was called Public Works Administration. He was one of the very first federal administrators of an unemployment relief program in San Francisco, in the northern part of California. So he was a well-known arm of the Roosevelt Administration.

Well, Dewey Anderson was having a big problem with a clique of so-called communists who were trying to get into his State Relief Administration.

He had allowed them to give him a lot of support and do a lot of campaigning for him. He wanted everybody of course to come and help him . . . he ran for the [State] Assembly, you know.

Jarrell: Right.

Wyckoff: He was always working with these various groups. I don't know if these people were communists or not, but they certainly acted like it. Anyway, as we went out the door, Mrs. Roosevelt was standing there . . . she was very tall, Dewey very short . . . and he looked up at her and said, "Mrs. Roosevelt, is it all right for me to employ a communist on my staff? What do you think?" She whirled on him. She said, "Absolutely not." That just froze him right there. (Laughter) It was the quickest answer you ever heard. "No," she just turned on him completely, no hesitation, "Absolutely not." Well, everybody fell back, you know. It was something that I think everybody had thought she would be wishy-washy about, and she wasn't at all. She was just flat as she could be. So Dewey was very much taken aback, but I don't think he had the courage to get rid of all of them. He got rid of some of them.

Jarrell: What did you think of her answer? At the time what was your feeling about it?

Wyckoff: Well I never knew whether they really were [communists] or weren't. And I didn't really feel that . . . well those that were undermining the attempts to make the agency function properly I thought ought to go, on the grounds of just plain disruption, you know. That kind of thing we certainly didn't need. Those who had a different agenda, you know, who were trying to undermine what you had to do, I think that was very destructive, and I'd certainly get rid of them on that ground rather than any other ground. Because [when] you say the word "communist," what have you got? You got people all the way from the "parlor pink" clear over to the somebody with a very destructive . . . it's one of those vague things.

Jarrell: Mr. Wyckoff was showing me an editorial from the *Washington Post* and really the issue was "communists as employees," and whether an employer could dismiss someone because he was thought to be a communist.



And as Mr. Wyckoff said, "Well, you know, the employer could define what a communist was."

Wyckoff: Anybody could . . .

Jarrell: We're talking about this in the '30s. As we know, in the ensuing years it became more and more serious and crucial . . .

Wyckoff: Till we got to the McCarthy days.

Jarrell: But we're already dealing with it, you know, before that. We're dealing with it in the '30s.

Wyckoff: Yes.

Jarrell: And we've had these hysterical cyclical phases.

Wyckoff: Yes.

Jarrell: And I'm interested because it's another manifestation of it in the Olson Administration, though by no means was it *the* issue.

Wyckoff: Well industrial associations were fostering this label for anybody who was opposed to them.

Jarrell: Oh, absolutely.

Wyckoff: So you had to differentiate between the real McCoy and the phony ones that they claimed were communists in order to hurt them. This is a very difficult thing to do. I know I was asked in Washington by some secret outfit, ONI, I guess it was . . . one of those investigative bodies at a cocktail party, that's where they love to come and get you. I was pulled out of this cocktail party and put into a little room and asked . . . It was really awfully funny. This young man who looked as though he was just wet behind the ears, came in and said that he had to interview me on the subject of this particular man who was in the SRA, and wanted a job somewhere else. And what did I know about him. And . . . "Well," I said, "I know exactly what was printed in the *Los Angeles Times*. Now, do you believe everything that's printed in the *Los Angeles Times*?" You see, this was the time of the Industrial Association, the heyday of this whole thing. I said, "You go back to the library and you get out all the back issues. You will find his complete life history there from one end to the other. You don't need to ask me anything 'cause I only know him casually. But you go back and take a look and you'll see. I said, "By the way, how do you like this work you're doing?" You know pretty soon the man was in tears. I said, "Do you really enjoy coming in here and busting up a cocktail party just to do this? Do you like this kind of work?" "Oh," he said, "no, I really don't."



So he practically went away in tears by the time we got through. But they had that method of coming in and trying to get you. Especially they liked to get you if you'd had two martinis and they thought you'd talk better. It really was a lot of nerve going in and knocking on a private home and asking to speak to somebody. It shows though that they have us all under surveillance. No doubt about that.

### Food for Freedom

**Wyckoff:** Well, I haven't talked about Food for Freedom yet.

**Jarrell:** No, you haven't.

**Wyckoff:** Well, I was working in an organization called Food for Freedom which was set up to keep up our production of food as an important part of the war effort, and to support the United Nations agencies as they came along. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation was the first one, and then the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. This Food for Freedom was a group of people who were from all walks of life. The Board of Directors were very distinguished people. I'll read into the record who some of them were. Mrs. Dwight Morrow, wife of a Morgan partner, was chairman, and there were a broad range of people representing various organizations including the labor movement . . . the AFL-CIO had people on the board, and the churches did . . . and various groups. One purpose of it was to raise just a little money for the purpose of an educational campaign. It was an information service on food conservation, production, and nutrition to alert these organizations as to what was going on in Washington so they could move fast when they needed to. We followed specific legislation through various committees of Congress. It was a great education for me. I really enjoyed learning how things work in our government, and this gave me a ringside seat.

**Jarrell:** Well, you'd learned it in California, and now you were going to the nation's capitol—large scale.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. I was learning it in Washington. It was a fascinating thing.

**Jarrell:** That's right.

**Wyckoff:** And so I was not . . .

**Jarrell:** You were quite independent.

**Wyckoff:** I was independent and not forced to get into the kind of unhappy situations that can occur there.



I met some awfully interesting people. For instance, I met Senator George Norris before he died. He was a great historical character, you know, and was regarded with such respect even though he was so feeble and so far gone that he was hardly all there, really. Some of the others that were very old, they were protected as just honorary monuments more than anything else. Their staffs protected them so carefully.

**Jarrell:** If you would like to talk about the work of Food for Freedom in . . . I would like to know specifically what were some of the issues which Food for Freedom pushed for.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. I was not involved in the international aspects of this thing, except as one member of the team. My primary interest lay in the local business of trying to support the fate of the farm workers in this country during the war. However, the labor movement had to be convinced that the Food and Agricultural organization was valuable and important to the world and to their fate too. So the only time that I got heavily involved in this was when I was asked to take charge of putting on a mass meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, where Henry Wallace was to be the featured speaker. It was intended for all the labor movement in the state of Ohio and that part of the country. And Leon Henderson was to be his . . . well, the two of them were to be the two main speakers for this thing. My job, as a facilitator . . . I don't know why it is that I have always found it easy, easier, to do arranging; I seem to be able to do that kind of thing. My background in the Theater Union and in all kinds of things gave me enough knowledge to be able to do the things that were needed for that . . . such as newspaper publicity, arranging the auditorium, contacting all the organizations, doing the public relations . . .

**Jarrell:** All the mechanics of doing it.

**Wyckoff:** All the mechanics to bring a big crowd together at a certain time in a certain place and see that the speakers got there and that there was a pitcher of water on the table (laughter) . . . you know . . . this is the kind of thing. I have never been the guy that made the speech; I'm the one that gets the people there to make the speech, you know. And it's . . . oh, I felt comfortable in that role and have been able to do it. I guess I'm just a natural born facilitator, or whatever you want to call it, but not a leader.

**Jarrell:** What was the rally?

**Wyckoff:** They have an enormous auditorium in Cleveland; it is huge. And how we were ever going to fill it, I had no idea . . . and here I was a total





stranger there. The only person I knew was Elizabeth Magee who ran the National Consumers League which hadn't yet moved to Washington, D.C. so I had to call on her . . . and I said, "I've got this assignment of creating and bringing the whole labor movement together; can you help me do this?"

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Wyckoff: Well, she rose up and did a job. I got off the train (mind you, we didn't fly anywhere in those days) in Cleveland, and I was met by a black automobile that was about as big as a freight car. And in it was the president of the Railway Engineers Union. These were the railroad unions; Miss Magee knew them all. And there's a council, an executive council of all the railroad unions. And I want to tell you, they're the most conservative group *on earth*, and Ohio was the center of their national office.

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Wyckoff: Miss Magee had her office in the National Railroad Engineers building. So, anyway, she rallied all these stuffy, old union people. And they were wonderful. They were very kind to me because they took it that Miss Magee gave her blessings to me. So I was treated royally. All the chauffeurs, anything I wanted, I stayed in the big hotel there. And everything was rolled out. I was introduced to the editors of the newspapers and all the things these old boys helped out.

Jarrell: It was so necessary for you to accomplish this thing.

Wyckoff: Yes. However, they let me know that they didn't think much of Henry Wallace. So it was really funny. They were really doing this for President Roosevelt and for Miss Magee.

Jarrell: This was when he was Secretary of Agriculture, right?

Wyckoff: Yes, yes. So it was really quite a performance. Right in the middle of it, a member of the painter's union got up when we were having a planning meeting and he got up and he says, "Wyckoff . . . what kind of a name is that? Russian, ha!" And he said, "She's a red." And I had to explain that I wasn't a red and Wyckoff wasn't a Russian name, it was a Dutch name. And he said, "Well, it ends in 'off', you know." (Laughter) I had the most terrible time trying to keep the show on the road there. Oh, it was funny.



Well, it cost a fortune to do this 'cause we had to take ads and get all these things, and it was quite expensive to do the whole thing.

**Jarrell:** Where did the money come from?

**Wyckoff:** Well, of course, you see, Food for Freedom had all these foundations that could be drawn on to do all these things and we had all kinds of commitments from them to do this sort of thing. Well, at the end of the whole thing . . . here I'd thought I was such a great manager . . . everybody went home except Leon Henderson and he was kind of suspicious of whether or not I was really going to be able to handle this 'cause I was very young and green, in his eyes, and didn't have a very bureaucratic background in this. And it's lucky for me he stuck around because, "Did you get all the bills?" I said, "Yes." And I . . . he said, "Can you pay them?" And I said, "Well, I'm five thousand dollars in the hole." "Well," he said, "okay, here it is." And he wrote a check . . . he said, "You can go home now." (Laughter) So I had to . . . I got back to Food for Freedom and we were able to reimburse Leon Henderson, but I'll tell you there was a moment there when I thought I was going to have to wash dishes for the rest of my life. So I had a few small adventures; there's no doubt about that.

**Jarrell:** What was the turnout like?

**Wyckoff:** Well, the auditorium I'd say was three-quarters full. It was raining you know so it was really incredible that they filled it as full as they did but this was for FDR . . . they were given fight talks in their unions that they must go.

**Jarrell:** (Laughter)

**Wyckoff:** Oh, it was tough. Anyway, we did get the kind of publicity and what-not that we needed in order to develop some of these things. So this is a little background on the way we worked and how things operated.

### **An Education in Congressional Culture: Lobbying on the Hill**

**Wyckoff:** Well I learned a great deal about the methods of working up there. When I mentioned about Henry Fowler's beautiful language . . . you can almost get any bill in, sponsored by somebody with a little backing, if you couch it in the right language and preserve the protocol and see the right



people to get it in. It's an unwritten law. There are people up there who have established a pecking order among the staffs of both the House and the Senate. And if you don't know . . . what that is you're dead. It isn't in any book; you can't learn it in a university. You have to pick it up from being there. Furthermore, it changes. Because people die and move away, or if something happens. But the system which remains is one of an extraordinarily personal nature to get things through.

Well I was fortunate to have a guide, a philosopher and friend who could initiate me in to some of those things later on. When I was there during this time, I didn't have that advantage. I was more or less dependent on my boss, Harold Weston, who was five times as innocent as I was. He was really innocent. But he was one of those people who is so pure and so dedicated that he just stumbled around and somehow got things going. He was a very devout Quaker and a conscientious objector, a man who lived by his principles. He was a very fine man and we all admired him very much. But he was naive and . . . very pure in his motives. He was really great. His wife, Faith, was just as wonderful as he was.

So I was working in an atmosphere that was . . . well, it wasn't very deep into the murky side of Washington. I was floating more or less like a little bubble on the top. Of course my husband's work was the thing that governed everything. We never left Washington really at all because he worked right straight through the whole war. I don't think he had more than about two days vacation the whole time we were there. He worked so hard. Oh!

### Office of Price Administration

**Wyckoff:** Well, through the Women's Joint Congressional Committee and the National Consumer's League, I became a member of the National Consumer's Advisory Board of the Office of Price Administration. And that was an experience that was really remarkable. Under Leon Henderson and under Chester Bowles. I wish to heaven we had price control now. I can tell you that.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** Now they say, oh, price control was a dreadful thing. Well, it wasn't a dreadful thing at all. People really were glad to have price control when things would skyrocket so easily. It was hard to get ration boards to function. But it was really remarkable, I thought, how well they did function. There are the kind of people who are natural-born cheats and they always will be, and you can't do anything about that. But there was morale. The war effort was really something that did pull people together to do these things.

**Jarrell:** And in spite of the fact that there were always some rotten abuses.



Wyckoff: Sure, there were always rotten apples . . . yes.

Jarrell: There was a degree of confidence though that sacrifices were being shared?

Wyckoff: That's right. They were sharing the sacrifices.

Jarrell: It really generated a feeling then?

Wyckoff: Yes, it did, it did. There's no question about it. Well, one of the things that made it . . . particularly crucial was that there were seventy-five industry committees and only one consumer committee in the Office of Price Administration.

Jarrell: . . . a bit unbalanced?

Wyckoff: The balance was not as great as . . . I think there was one labor committee and one consumer committee. And other than that, there were these seventy-five industry committees, all of which wanted to get the prices up. The steel [industry] committee was the worst of all. We all knew the steel committee was the one that we had to watch, because everything seemed connected to its policies; the minute that the price of a ton of steel went up, everything went up with it. It was just really dreadful.

So we would watch that and when it came time for a threat of an increase in the price of steel, we would all gather up our weapons and march down to the White House and ask for an interview with the President. Of course Chester Bowles was glad to arrange for the interview, because we were the only arm he had really to try to keep the lid on things. We were a very feeble arm . . . we had the President of the General Federation of Women's Clubs . . . I remember very well, she wore about a \$20,000 mink coat . . . and a hat that had roses all around it.

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Wyckoff: We started out one day from the OPA office which was in a temporary building somewhere. We came up to the White House gate in a fleet of taxicabs, and we were supposed to be allowed to go right in. But instead they made us get out and have our credentials examined at the gate instead of at the door of the White House. And it was *pouring* rain. It was one of those summer *torrential* rains. And here was this lady in the \$20,000 mink coat. And she stood there and her flowers all started coming down . . . and everything began to wash down. You know, I really admired that woman. She never let it faze her at all. We finally got into the White House like a bunch of drowned ducks. She took off this thing that weighed about two hundred pounds by the time she got in, it had drunk up all this water.





(Laughter) She handed it to the doorman, who picked it up and nearly fell down with it; she took off her hat and just threw it on the floor, and marched in with us . . .

Jarrell: Such presence.

Wyckoff: Well, she was great. She marched in with us to see President Truman. I am trying to think of some of the people there . . . Mrs. Morrow was there. Mrs. Morrow was Chairman of the Board of Food for Freedom. Her husband Dwight was a banker, a Morgan Partner, and Ambassador to Mexico. Her daughter Ann married Charles Lindbergh. There was a whole lot of very distinguished ladies that were there—the President of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, etc. They asked the President if he could please hold the line on the price of steel which was threatening to go from \$4 to \$5 [a ton]. Well, the President was peppery, but he was willing to listen to us, and that was about the best we could do. As I recall it, we did hold the line that year. But after that year we lost, I remember, and it went on up.

Jarrell: Well I never had realized that you were with the Office of Price Administration; I hadn't seen any papers which indicated this particular activity.

Wyckoff: Oh yes. I came out here to California and I went right on to the local San Francisco Rationing Board and got a very good sample of local feeling towards OPA. We came home to California in 1946 before the board was abolished. So I got a chance to see how it operated out at the end of the line, which was a good learning experience. Roy Cave was chairman of the San Francisco committee. I was able to work long enough with that committee to become acquainted with the whole network of ration boards, and price control boards throughout the State of California and to see how they functioned. That was a great thing. I thoroughly enjoyed that.

### Washington, D.C. Social Life

Jarrell: Would you discuss your social life in Washington since you've mentioned to me that this is where so much substantial business and politicking were accomplished?

Wyckoff: It's true. That's right.

Jarrell: Rather than during business hours or in meetings or whenever.

Wyckoff: That's right . . . social contacts.

Jarrell: You mentioned that this was a really remarkable Washington phenomenon.



**Wyckoff:** I think it's true today just as much. I think that for some reason or other you can circulate around and talk to people and see people in a social setting in a way where . . . you don't have to go into the office and get on the calendar and have somebody screen you . . .

**Jarrell:** Set you up?

**Wyckoff:** Yes. Set you up and go through a half a dozen little functionaries who are all jealous of who their boss is seeing; who are trying very hard to protect him from too many people, or people that *they* don't approve of. The social setting permits circulating around and seeing people of all different ranks. So I think that more probably is accomplished in social settings than anybody realizes. The general public doesn't realize how important those everlasting cocktail parties and dinners and gatherings of one kind or another are. We gave innumerable parties. We had the most constant stream [of people] . . . even though we lived in a hopeless place for giving parties.

**Jarrell:** What was the house like?

**Wyckoff:** Well the first house we had was a great one for giving parties. It was 3416 Q Street, right next to Georgetown University. It had a dining room and a kitchen . . . and like many houses there, was tiny. The house itself wasn't big; it was about as wide as this living room—the whole house. On the ground floor there was a dining room, a kitchen, and a patio garden in the back of the lot where you could get outdoors because it's suffocating back there in the summer. There was no air conditioning then. The next floor was a big living room, a bedroom, and a bathroom. The living room had a beautiful fireplace and a lovely view out over trees. It was very park-like. The third floor contained two bedrooms, a bathroom and storage closets and things like that. When I arrived to rent that house, it was really funny. We paid \$50 a month for our home here in San Francisco and the only thing I could find to rent in Washington was \$250 a month which was a big jump for us with our small income. So I took the house at this exorbitant rate thinking well we'll be living on pabulum or something.

**Jarrell:** You'd have to?

**Rosalie Covington**

**Wyckoff:** It was about the only way you could survive. Fortunately they increased our wages a little bit after we got there so we could handle it. But even then it was awfully steep. But when I walked into this house which was the only one that seemed to be available in all of Washington at the moment, the person who took me in showed me through the whole house. I went up to the top and opened the closet door, and here was a Negro maid in the



closet, crying . . . she was scared to death. I had never had a Negro maid in my life . . . but she came with the house. I didn't know this. She was frightened about what her new employer would be like.

**Jarrell:** What was her name?

**Wyckoff:** Rosalie Covington. I couldn't believe it. As it turned out she had a profound influence over us. She was our first contact with a true southern Negro, raised in the cotton culture, with a mother who lived in a little cabin down on the farm and made country bacon and sent it up to her daughter, you know. She belonged to the old slave culture where you hardly knew who the father of your children was, you had no nuclear family. The family was a matriarchy right down the line. Women were the stable force in life. The men just drifted in and out and went around, you know, any old way. There was never a husband that you could locate anywhere of any of the women in this group . . . it was really astonishing. They were all devoutly religious and belonged to a church that really filled most of their needs. The church provided everything . . . their health insurance came through the church, their burial insurance came through the church, their immunization shots were given in the church . . . the church was the main central thing. Well we learned a great deal about this life.

Rosalie Covington was a great person. The stories she told . . . well we still just can't believe them, they're so wonderful. She said, "Ise a good woman. I wups my children every day." I said, "Why, Rosalie, you wouldn't do that." She said, "Yes," she said, "just one time I didn't." I said, "Well, what happened?" "Well," she said, "John Willy, that's the young one," she said, "John Willy was down in the cabin in Maxwell, [North Carolina] and I was sweeping out the floor, and John Willy was settin' on the stoop, and he say to me, he say, "They'se a lion coming down the street." And I say to him, "John Willy, you come here. I'm going to wup you. Don't you tell me no lie."

"You go upstairs and you pray to the Lord to make you a good boy. You get down on your knees and you pray to the Lord to make you a good boy. When I finish sweeping, I'm coming up and I'll wup you." She said John Willy went upstairs and he got down on his knees and he prayed. She said she looked out the door and she saw a dog coming down the street and he looked just like a lion. His head was shaved so he had a big mane of fur around his neck. And she realized that John Willy thought it was a lion.

So Rosalie went upstairs and said, "John Willy, did you pray to the Lord to make you a good boy?"

"Yesum (tearfully), I prayed to the Lord to make me a good boy." "Did the Lord speak to you, John Willy?"

"Yes, the Lord did speak to me." Rosalie said, "What did the Lord say to you?"



"The Lord say to me . . . 'Looked mighty like a lion to me too.'" (Laughter)  
She said: "I *couldn't* wup him!"

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Wyckoff: So she'd have a story like that for us almost every day. So we were just enthralled with her. She was so wonderful. She had so many marvelous stories.

Jarrell: Did she live with you?

Wyckoff: No, she didn't. She came in every day. She also worked for another family. She would work in the morning for them and then come to me about 4 o'clock. She would cook our dinner and wash the dishes and then go home. So she had a long day with two jobs. She had five children, I think, and they were still in school then. There was only one son that was grown and his name was Benjamin Franklin Covington, and she was so proud of him because he'd gone into the Navy in one of those "checkerboard [integrated] ships" . . . where they had Negroes and he was one of the very early ones to get a deck job of some kind which was really quite a step up for the Navy.

Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: Anyway, she was always terrified that something might happen to Benjamin Franklin.

## National Consumers League and Agricultural Labor Issues

(continued)

Wyckoff: Now there's a great Lasker family, of course. Albert Lasker. And Florina, I think, was not related. If she was, it was distant, but she was a wealthy woman. She was a friend of, and an early, I think, board member of the National Consumers League. She was an old, old lady when I got to New York. She was a member of the board, and I think, at one time, she might have been chairman of the board, I'm not sure. Anyway, when I got back there, I was brought in as a kind of a visitor, and, from the Far West. The board membership was concentrated in New York, New Jersey, Ohio; there were a few members in Oregon, in Wisconsin, and Michigan. But it wasn't, you know, a truly national organization. New York was a cozy little place to meet, you know. Yes, it was concerned with conditions under which consumer goods were manufactured—at first it was mainly labor conditions in the garment industry.





When I came from the far west, I was full of interest in the condition of farm workers. And I thought, well, if you're going to have a National Consumers League for fair labor standards, obviously the problem in fair labor standards is greatest in agriculture. You really ought to face that if you're worth your salt, you know. So I went rather brashly in, being very young and they were all very old . . . and I went in and sounded off on the subject of the conditions of child labor, for example, in agriculture, especially the conditions in California; I didn't know too much about the conditions in other states, but I knew something about the conditions in California, and I let them know what I knew about it.

Well, they decided they should make a study. They were all very careful people. So they put up some money, and they hired a woman. And they decided there was no reason why they shouldn't make a study of agriculture in New York State since there were migrant agricultural people who came up from the south . . . as far as I know that was one of the very early studies on the migrant stream coming from Florida. They discovered conditions that appalled them. They published a little report on this, and they got more and more interested.

About this time, dear old lady Florina Lasker died, and I think she left her entire fortune—a very substantial sum of money with the taxes paid on it . . . it was not tax-exempt money, in other words—to the National Consumers League, to open an office in Washington, D.C., to lobby for the purpose of enabling the farm worker to be included under the Social Security Act. So they moved the headquarters of the National Consumers League from Ohio to Washington, D.C., and set up an office there and worked to get the farm worker included under Social Security. And I don't think it ever would have happened if it hadn't been for an organized lobby to do that. Previously because the farm workers has never had anything except a very feeble voice back there, the urban unions would trade off the farm workers' interest always in order to get a little bit ahead in the labor legislation that they had to get passed . . .

**Jarrell:** For the urban people.

**Wyckoff:** Yes, for the urban people. The reason for this was that they had to get past all those southern senators . . . southern congressmen and southern states that were based on cotton and cheap labor. These southerners were the chairmen of all the legislative committees that dealt with questions of labor and the questions of protection of child labor and this sort of thing. So the farm workers had been sold out down the line year after year after year. Always. Florina Lasker decided that it was time to give some money to stop this thing, and to try to focus and bring attention to this issue; so as far as I know, that was one of the first concerted efforts to do something.



Jarrell: What year was this?

Wyckoff: Well, this was during the war really.

Jarrell: If we could pick up the thread of your commitment to the Farm Security Administration and how you actively participated in keeping the FSA going during the war years and the kinds of activities you were involved in in this realm.

### Food for Freedom (continued)

Wyckoff: Yes, yes. Well, it all tied in, you see, with the Food for Freedom. Now I'd better tell you [more] about that little organization which was set up for the purpose of stimulating food production during the war. Because we were, as you know, feeding ourselves and the rest of the world practically.

Jarrell: Everybody.

Wyckoff: So Food for Freedom was considered to be a very patriotic endeavor. We set up this incredible organization . . . I was looking at the names of the people on the letterhead stationery and it included the greatest combination of people on the advisory council. Louis Adamic, Amy Aldrich (that's the Rockefeller family), Ida Bailey, Allen, who wrote a famous cookbook, Julian Arnold, Henry Atkinson—that was "one world" Atkinson; Burkhead, Esther Cole Brunauer, she was a professor of economics somewhere . . . I don't remember exactly who they all were . . . Eleanor Coit, of course, came from Worker's Education and was a good friend of ours; she was the founder of the American Labor Education Service which was financed by the AF of L and helped to start the Pacific Coast School for Labor with which I was very active. Dabney was a newspaperman from North Carolina; Harry Emerson Fosdick, as you know, was a rip-roaring preacher from New York who had a huge following . . . I think he was a Congregationalist . . . but he was a *really* glib fellow who led a large group; then Helen Gahagan Douglas, Congresswoman from California of course, you know; Lester B. Granger . . . belonged to a farm organization; William Green was president of the AF of L/CIO . . . Mrs. Mary Borden Harriman, Daisy Harriman. She owned the building in which Food for Freedom had its office and made a donation, I think, of the rent probably, to us. As a matter of fact, I got into this thing through Agnes Inglis who lived upstairs in that building. Elizabeth Herring who was with the YWCA; Bishop Hobson of Phillips Exeter Academy. Allen Kline was president of the American Farm Bureau Federation; Daniel Koshland, a San Francisco financier, Mrs. Thomas Lamont, of course, that's the Morgan partner. This incredible man, Harold Weston, a pacifist and Quaker, was the Director and I was the Assistant Director. Harold had served as a Red Cross medical aide during the first



World War running an ambulance in France. He had been wounded and was crippled; he had a leg that was almost useless. He used a crutch or a cane most of the time. Anyway he was beyond the age of being drafted, but he was eager to get into things. He was a name-dropper I'm afraid . . .

**Jarrell:** (Laughter)

**Wyckoff:** He knew everybody; he lived in New York and he knew how to mine in foundations for money for good causes, and was really pretty clever at it. You can see what he put together here.

**Jarrell:** So he really put this membership together?

**Wyckoff:** No, we all put in, the board of directors put in the names.

**Jarrell:** The board of directors all . . . I see.

**Wyckoff:** The board of directors were very active and worked hard at this. And they got the names together. This was the group that really started it all when they . . . I put in several of these names. I put in Dan Koshland; I put in Mrs. Thomas MacAllister. Another board member was Mrs. Gifford Pinchot. She was marvelous.

**Jarrell:** I've been reading all about her husband.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. Well, of course, he was a great conservationist and a great friend of Teddy Roosevelt and belonged to that group. Mrs. Pinchot was sort of like Alice Roosevelt; she was a *very* outspoken woman. And had the most tremendous courage. She dyed her hair a shade of red that no human being ever had. Oh, it was the most flaming red. She said, "Well, my dear, my hair was just mousy. And nobody knew who I was at all. And I decided I was going to pick a color so that no one would ever forget me." And she did. It was scarlet. It was just appalling. And of course she was an old lady with white hair underneath it and wore! . . . this hair of hers . . . people couldn't take their eyes off of it.

She was very sympathetic to labor, yet she was loyal to her husband, of course, who had very difficult problems. There was a wonderful story of a sit-in involving the auto workers before the formation of the United Auto Workers, in the early days when there were awful labor wars going on.

**Jarrell:** During the organizing committee days . . . yes.

**Wyckoff:** The labor people refused to get out of a factory, and they stayed in the plant. They were surrounded by the National Guard or some such thing; they were all starving in there and having an awful time. In the middle of the



night, Mrs. Pinchot climbed through the window with a cake for the strikers—it was the craziest story I ever heard. That was her idea.

Jarrell: "Let them eat cake."

Wyckoff: A cake. Don't you love it. (Laughter)

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Wyckoff: Well there was a great news story about Mrs. Pinchot climbing through the window to encourage the boys to hang on, and that she would work very hard, and she and her husband would work very hard to try to get the National Guard away; she did everything she could anyway to help the United Auto Workers get organized, and therefore was known as a very good friend of labor. But, of course, she was a Republican.

There was Clarence Poe. He was an interesting man. He was a farmer from North Carolina. He wrote a lot of books, headed the North Carolina Food Council, and I think Truman finally appointed him to the National Advertising Board. He was a dairyman, and a cotton farmer; he wrote a lot of books on cotton. He was a newspaper man and had very strong feelings about the importance of food in this whole war thing; he was somebody who could get all kinds of things on national broadcasting to mobilize messages.

Jarrell: Messages and propaganda.

Wyckoff: To mobilize . . . propaganda on the subject of food. He worked, I think, with Harold, on that all during the war.

Some others included Luther Ely Smith, who was head of Morehouse College; I think he was a Negro, I'm not that sure. Hans Cristian Sona was head of the Twentieth Century Fund and a member of the National Planning Association. And Raymond Gram Swing . . . who was a very, very outspoken news commentator on radio. You know we only had radio; we didn't have TV in those days. And you just *hung* on the radio to hear what Raymond Gram Swing had to say 'cause he was a great guy.

Jarrell: (Laughter) He commented on politics and international affairs.

Wyckoff: Yes. Mainly it was international politics. He had a biting wit, and was just a marvelous person. And then Dorothy Thompson, Upton Sinclair's wife. And just a wonderful witty person although she was kind of stormy. And Walter Wanger was a movie producer. Well, this will give you an idea of the group of people involved. Now Mrs. Dwight Morrow was president, you know.

Jarrell: Right.





**Wyckoff:** And she would lead a little flock of us into the White House, to make our presentation for things that we wanted to get through.

**Jarrell:** Now whom did you present them to . . . the President? Or Mrs. Roosevelt?

**Wyckoff:** Mostly Mrs. Roosevelt, yes. But sometimes the President. We went twice I think to the President. It was very thrilling to go and sit and look while Mrs. Morrow presented our case.

**Jarrell:** Well, tell me what would be a specific issue, for instance. You were an extensive advisory board; were they an active working board?

**Wyckoff:** Oh yes, they were really an active working board. We worked awfully hard at things like getting the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Organization established. Getting the United States into it; getting the Food and Agriculture Organization established; getting the United States to support it. This Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) was part of an international effort. These people included members in the labor movement such as Boris Shishkin and Leo Goodman.

Ruth Lamb Atkinson was one of those extremely dry, witty, and sharp Yankee characters. She became the head lobbyist for the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. And this is a springboard from which you can do plenty. They are the cleverest lobbyists I think I've ever known, or at least they were then. Mainly because of her knowledge, I guess, of the Hill. But they had no money, and they didn't need any money. They did their lobbying through their political clout that was available at the polls, at home. And all they needed was a telephone bill. And that's all they spent their money on. And 10¢ a month, which is the dues, was enough nationally . . . well, a million women, you know. Men and women, but mainly women, was enough to supply the phone calls . . . and they had no central office or anything . . . all this was done out of the homes, as I recall it. But it was the planning and coordination of their efforts, and their knowledge of the hill. They were the most effective lobbyists in the Women's Joint Congressional Committee . . . they really knew what they were doing. The others would just present pompous papers and expect everybody to bow down. These people didn't do that, no.

**Jarrell:** What were some of the issues that were critical? I mean that they really pushed.

**Wyckoff:** Well, they changed of course as each measure came up.

**Jarrell:** Right.

**Wyckoff:** As a measure would come up.



Jarrell: But what was the . . .

Wyckoff: Well, the Food and Drug was one that was very important to them.

Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: Pure food, pure milk, pure . . . well the things like the dye in margarine I remember was something that they got all fired up about.

Jarrell: The yellow dye, or . . .

Wyckoff: Yes. (Laughter) they had a big time over the dye in margarine.

Anyway, Farm Security Administration, you see, was one of the things that I was trying to get them to help us on, because it seemed to me that Farm Security was an extremely important thing. In fact, most of the effort that I made here was to get this whole WJCC organization back of the preservation of Farm Security, because I thought that the farm workers on the land were a very key part of this whole food production thing.

Jarrell: Exactly.

Wyckoff: If you didn't pay them well, if you didn't treat them right, if you didn't give them housing, if you didn't give them medical care, if you didn't do these things, your whole food thing would fall through.

Jarrell: That's the backbone of your interest?

Wyckoff: So my main interest was that. And these labor people backed me up on it.

Jarrell: Yes. (Laughter)

Wyckoff: In our office Mrs. Margaret Tilley shared the space with FFF. She was head of the National Council of Methodist Women South. They were a group of teetotalers; they were extremely straight. And they were probably the greatest bulwark against the Ku Klux Klan that there was. They were a remarkable group of women.

Their husbands would sit in the rocking chair on the front porch . . . drinking mint juleps . . . when the wives would be out in the backyard doing things like preserving the Farm Security Administration and winding up rather often with a fiery cross burned on their front lawn. This would happen. It happened to Mrs. Tilley several times. The old lady, I'll never forget her . . . Mrs. M. E. Tilley . . . she was incredible. (Laughter) times. The Ku Klux would come and do that to her. Anyway she was a darling woman; she was a very



good lobbyist too. She was a typical southern magnolia; she spoke with a southern accent so strong you could hardly . . . she came from Atlanta.

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Wyckoff: Anyway she educated me a great deal on how to handle those old southern senators which was the key to everything. And Mrs. Atkinson, who was the one from the National Congress, knew that without the Southern Methodist Women, she would never get anywhere. So when the time came to move a Senate Committee chairman such as, we'll say Senator Lister Hill of Alabama . . .

Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: . . . he was a key person in all this.

Jarrell: Oh, absolutely.

Wyckoff: And he could not get along without the vote of the Southern Methodist Women.

So you see this whole thing was put together to make things happen in a particular congress at a particular time. And we were obviously mobilizing the organizations . . . I was looking at the various organizations that we sort of tied into. I've read you some of them to give you just samples of what they were . . . and of course we could ask any of these people to speak up on an issue for us . . . they didn't all agree on everything; I don't think they ever met as a group . . . the board met as a group . . .

Jarrell: But not the advisory?

Wyckoff: Not the advisory, no. Well, we'd ask somebody to write a letter . . . like Louis Adamic or Ida Bailey Allen or somebody to write a letter on a subject that would be of some concern to us as we were moving along through all these, and then . . . 19 . . .

Jarrell: What year was Food for Freedom incorporated and what was its life?

Wyckoff: Oh. Now you ask me. (Laughter) I think it was about . . .

Jarrell: '42?

Wyckoff: Must have been about '42 I would guess . . . something like that. It wasn't very long. Yes, it was during the war. That's right.

Jarrell: I can see now what your emphasis was . . . what would you say, if you had to characterize generally what were the broadscale activities of Food for Freedom?



**Wyckoff:** FSA was one . . . Well now, I wanted to mention Agnes Inglis because . . . this is just a sideline but it's such a delightful story . . . Agnes Inglis was the one who got me in the Food for Freedom; I would never have met any of those people if it hadn't been . . . you know these curious chance contacts change your whole life.

There I was in Washington not knowing very many people . . . I knew some people slightly, but not awfully well. And I wasn't sure what to do with myself, and I started off and I think I told you, interviewing recruits for the Women's Army Corps.

### Recruiting for the Women's Army Corps

**Wyckoff:** It was the most fascinating experience. For an anthropologist, it would have been absolutely marvelous because I had to interview a stream of women from southern states, and I didn't know anything about the southern states, and I was to administer the intelligence test to the volunteers. The intelligence test made no sense whatever to a southern Negro cotton picker, right out of the fields. It was utter idiocy; the test was so stupid and included questions such as, 'what is Chippendale furniture' . . . that sort of stuff.

**Jarrell:** (Laughter)

**Wyckoff:** Well, what does that mean to a poor little cotton picker who never saw anything but fatback and corn pone . . . you know, it was just ridiculous. So I spoke to the officer—very pompous woman—and I said, "Do you realize that this test doesn't make any sense at all?" And she said, "Yes, I realize it. Use your own sense." (Laughter)

**Jarrell:** (Laughter)

**Wyckoff:** I said, "All right. Fine." So we threw the test out. And what happened was this: I got so fascinated with their stories, with their lives, and why they wanted to come and of course "join the army and see the world"—this is what they all thought they were going to do. For me it was just simply fabulous to learn about the life of people that I knew nothing about before. Of course I couldn't make the interviews very short; they just got longer and longer and longer. I was just having a glorious time understanding all these wonderful and different women; among the most interesting ones were the pioneer nurses from the south; I had never met them. And of course I heard from them how they would go on their horses in the middle of the night with a roll of newspapers and a kerosene lantern, answering a call for help . . . going out over the mountains to some little cabin somewhere, where a woman was due to have a baby; to go in there and be the midwife. They were marvelous. And I said, "You mustn't leave your job; you're the only one





available to give medical care in a place where there's no doctor, there's nothing. You mustn't desert these people. This is a terrible thing." So I had the most awful time trying to convince them that they were already patriotically serving their country. So I'd have these great arguments with them. I told them that no other women know how to do this. They were the only ones. Then I got one of them to describe the whole process of how they delivered a baby and what they did. It was really very interesting because they had been trained in all the sanitary, protective devices necessary to protect that woman in the most incredibly primitive, dirty, setting. What they did was to spread newspapers all over everything; the newspapers are the most sanitary thing you've got.

### Agnes Inglis

**Wyckoff:** It was fascinating and I did that until the job I think finally folded up when they got enough people.

I didn't know quite what to do then. So I went to a party as usual, one of Daisy Harriman's parties, where I met Agnes Inglis. And Aggie was the mobilizer. She said, "Well, now here you are; you've just arrived; I'm an old hand here and I think that there are some things that need to be done. You have some background and I think it would be just fine if you and Molly Flynn get together." Molly was in Farm Security and I, you see, had a great interest in her because of her being probably the greatest woman expert on migration in this country . . . she was a fascinating woman, really a remarkable person. So Molly and I were assigned to Harold Weston, who was also a friend of Aggie's, and she said, "Now you and Harold get together and just start something and I'll get Daisy to give you the office downstairs." (Laughter) So the whole thing grew right there in that party. It was really an amazing thing.

So I got to know Aggie. Aggie was a spinster. She had gone to India as a missionary nurse and had taken her mother with her. She never could see any reason why she shouldn't adopt a child because she thought that that was a noble thing to do. So she found this little orphan, and she adopted him. Took him with her to India on the ship . . . I don't know how they worked all this out because, you know, in those days the laws were totally different from what they are.

**Jarrell:** Oh yes.

**Wyckoff:** But she was a schemer and able to do things that nobody else could get away with. Anyway her boy was a fine fellow and he grew up a little bit till he was about six years old or so, and then they came back in this country and she went into that upstairs apartment—probably Daisy put her there, I don't know, and she decided that her little boy needed a brother. So she said, "Now I think what we'll do is go to an orphanage," and she turned to her little son



and she said, "Now will you come and help me pick him out?" So they went into the orphanage and he picked out a brother. And then they went to the court together and said to the judge that they wanted to adopt this little boy. The social workers . . . they were stumped. They'd never seen anything like it. But Aggie could sell something like that. She really got it organized and she didn't sell it herself; the little boy went forward and asked the judge if he could have this little boy as a brother. The judge was overwhelmed and of course approved it. Well this process went on and the two little boys went and picked another one until there were four of them. And they were the most delightful four little boys, no girls. And they were the greatest things . . . of course they were rioting upstairs over our office all during the Food for Freedom days. Finally the boys decided they needed a father. So she said, "All right. You go pick me out a father and I'll marry him and you can have a father."

Jarrell: Oh, no. Really?

Wyckoff: They went . . . and well of course Aggie was a very sociable person and her house had a stream of people going through it all the time, and they would just watch everybody. Finally they picked out a man named George who came to some of the parties . . . George was a very quiet, pipesmoking guy, a writer; he didn't talk much, he was just around. He'd pass the cake and the sandwiches, and the drinks. He was a helpful person; he didn't interfere with anything at all. So they finally decided that they liked George. So Aggie married George. After the war they bought a farm up in Connecticut and they all went up and lived on the farm and it was an extremely happy marriage and a very happy family. Isn't that an amazing thing? I thought that story was worth telling. It is such an astonishing thing.

Jarrell: How old a woman was Agnes then? In her mid-'40s?

Wyckoff: Not young; when I met her, I think she was around 40 or 45, something like that.

### Molly Flynn

Wyckoff: Well, Molly Flynn was another very interesting woman who was part of this. Molly was originally with Farm Security right from the beginning. She, too, was very well known in the Roosevelt inner, inner circle. She was a good friend of Mrs. Roosevelt. She was very Irish, and had a charm about her that was . . . it was a charisma kind of thing that just attracted people. She never married, but she just had a stream of admirers. I know that. She was with Food for Freedom for a while, got it sort of started and off the ground and advised us on a lot of things. Then she went with the U.N.



## Frank Graham

**Wyckoff:** Frank Graham was the president of the University of North Carolina and a very unusual person. He was a southerner who had an enormous interest in and sympathy for the problems of Negroes—the Negro farm workers' problems and the Negro sharecroppers' problems. He finally ran for Congress and suffered the same fate as Helen Gahagan Douglas—the same smear tactics were used against him. The National Association of Real Estate Boards would pour all their money into the one district to defeat him, the way they . . .

**Jarrell:** Hate literature and all.

**Wyckoff:** Hate literature and all these groups—the chamber of commerce, or thousands of different organizations that had that political technique of pouring money in to defeat one key person . . . and they killed him completely. Oh, they published stuff about his being a "red" . . . he wasn't "red" at all . . . He was just a decent human being with a great heart and cause.

Anyway, Jim Patton finally worked with him to set up The National Sharecroppers Fund which became a real spearhead for helping the southern tenant farmer who was the most desperately poor person, you know. Well, he did that. And then as a defeated congressman . . . you know, they have to do something for defeated congressmen in the Democratic party. Truman admired him and appointed him to a position in our delegation to the United Nations. So he was the United Nations person there for quite a while. Anyway, Molly went with him to the United Nations and there she was put in charge of things that related to all of the migrations in the world. There was a terrible migration out of Pakistan due to that religious war between Hindus and Moslems. And what happens when people pick up and move and are starving? Her experience was the dustbowl, you know, and the migration that took place there.

**Jarrell:** But this was another environment?

**Wyckoff:** But Molly was the kind of person who knew how to mobilize resources to handle a situation of this sort. They sent her out there, and she came back and reported to Frank. She worked on that and tried to get legislation through . . . worked with the different countries that were giving relief and help at that time. So, we never lost touch with Molly . . . we'd go to New York and see what always kept in touch with her. But she died very shortly after the war. Oh, she was just enchanting, just simply a wonderful person. Well, there were some very interesting women really when you get to think of it . . . Molly Flynn, Mrs. M.E. Tilley, Ruth Lamb Atkinson . . . and I'm telling you nothing but women; Aggie Inglis . . .



## A Southern Sojourn

**Wyckoff:** Of course I did see the other side of the South when we visited my friends, May Thompson Evans and her husband Ney Evans. We were taken on a grand tour of the south, saw some beautiful homes and met all the fancy people and got a taste of southern hospitality. She was incredible. Ney was a lawyer who served in Hubert's division as the general counsel in the War Shipping Administration. May was the assistant to Mrs. Thomas MacAllister who was head of the women's division under Roosevelt. She had the eastern part of the United States as her bailiwick. But May, as a southern woman political animal, she was a marvelous thing to study. Every bone in her body was political. Sparkling rockets. (Laughter)

**Jarrell:** (Laughter)

**Wyckoff:** She was a direct descendant of the woman who wrote *Little Women*.

**Jarrell:** Louisa Mae Alcott.

**Wyckoff:** Yes. She had that same kind of energy. She became head of the Employment Service in the state of North Carolina before her husband moved to Washington. Then she came up to Washington and was in the Labor Department and moved around into the . . . I think she was in the Children's Bureau and then she was in the Public Health Service, and then she was in the Consumer Division in the President's office . . . she moved around, all through everything. She was always given a job such as editing a little house paper or doing something of this sort. The main thing she wanted and she had, was a ringside seat at the political show. Her life was entertaining political figures. Her house was the most incredible collection of mementos . . . everything in it was something that was a memento of a big campaign; they had a rumpus room that was paved with pictures from top to bottom of FDR and all the people that had served under him . . . Jim Farley, everybody under the sun . . . the parties she had would be always political people . . . mostly, though, North Carolina. I'll never forget one party at her house, in a house not as big as this one . . . she invited 800 people. The street was a cul-de-sac; they had police and there was a chain across, letting people through. The whole party was given to meet a man named Capus Wenick who was a small-time politician from North Carolina who was going to become ambassador to San Salvador or some such place. But she used all of these things as an occasion. The dear senator whom she adored, Sam Ervin, she just worshiped Sam Ervin, and he, of course, was there. I stood in line at





that party. I had never been so exhausted in my life. You can imagine . . . to get 800 people through the place . . .

Jarrell: In a receiving line?

Wyckoff: In a receiving line I stood. And she had about fifteen people, and I was the only non-North Carolinian. When I got through, I was speaking with a North Carolina accent because that was the only way I could make myself understood.

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Wyckoff: Oh, it was something. So I had quite a course in southern hospitality from her. They took us on a tour of North Carolina and all the beautiful great homes in various places there, and it was quite an experience. I would only occasionally get a few comments from her on the facts of racial prejudice and segregation in the South . . . for example, the Negro could not use the public library. I was so shocked at that. That stung me worse than anything when I heard in the little towns that of course [inaudible]. It seemed so incredible to me. And yet she regarded herself as, oh my, quite liberal. But she was a very unemancipated person in that sense although actually she had, I thought, a very poor education. Anyway, she could not spell; she could not construct a good sentence. So the woman who edited her newspaper for a number of years and corrected it and put the correct English into it even though she was a professor at a woman's college down in North Carolina . . . but I can't recall the name of the woman who edited her paper. She was black.

### The Monday Night Group

Wyckoff: I've never thrown address books away; I've never kept diaries, but address books really help you. But I was looking at the list of people . . . I wrote "L" for the labor people 'cause I thought you might be interested to know who they are. Now Gardner Jackson was a newspaperman who was with the CIO and the Triple A [Agricultural Adjustment Administration] and the National Farmers Union. And Gardner got me into that curious group called The Monday Night Group . . . I don't know if I ever mentioned that to you.

Jarrell: No, you have never mentioned that.

Wyckoff: Well, that was the strangest thing. Because there was a thing called The Monday Night Group. James B. Carey was a member; Don Montgomery was a member; Jim Patton was a member, he was head of the Farmers Union.



Jarrell: Monday Night Group: was this an official name?

Wyckoff: Well, it had no name. It just met. Wilbur Cohen, the head of HEW from Wisconsin, was a very faithful person who attended these meetings.

Jarrell: You had both AFL and CIO people at these meetings?

Wyckoff: Yes. John Edelman was a member, from the National Textile Workers Union. Paul Sifton was also very active. Well this group of people met and it didn't have any agenda, didn't have anything; they met because this group had a sense that it was important for them to meet and to decide what policies they would push for in the Roosevelt administration. And that they must get their signals together, to do things together.

They were extremely suspicious of outsiders. And I realize now that they had access to intelligence that was extremely sensitive. For example, one day . . . I remember distinctly, Gardner came in and his eyes were just popping out of their sockets. He had information on atomic research. He said [inaudible] on the atomic bomb and he went through the whole thing, at Oakridge. Well anyway at the time, I guess it was probably a month or two after they actually discovered it that this little group got wind of this thing long before the bomb at Hiroshima, long before. Well it completely terrified this group. And . . . there were some other people who knew about it too. I know they all nodded and said, "Yes, we've heard a rumor," you know. Then we began to talk about the military, and what they would do with it. Somebody else came up with the most extraordinary piece of intelligence from the military. It was a complete plan for the whole United States, of how to carry out a military *coup d'état* and take over, in case of a revolution. This was all in case of a revolution.

Jarrell: Contingency plans?

Wyckoff: Yes, contingency plans. The military had a complete contingency plan for taking over this country if necessary with an entirely military government. Well this chilled us to the bone . . . you can imagine why we always went to these meetings.

Jarrell: This was quite conspiratorial.



**Wyckoff:** Oh, it was. We were terrified of these things. The question was—one thing the people in the Monday Night Group were always terrified of was the fear that somebody might get into this group who was a "commie." They were really afraid of communists. They were also afraid of people who leaked. And I remember trying to get . . .

**Jarrell:** How did you come to get into this group?

**Wyckoff:** I don't know.

**Jarrell:** You were an outsider.

**Wyckoff:** I was an innocent fool, really. You know how I got into it . . . I was interviewing someone in the group interested in health insurance.

**Jarrell:** Oh, I see. (Laughter)

**Wyckoff:** Well, this was before all that bomb business came up. I was very interested in national compulsory health insurance and so was Wilbur Cohen. You see, we'd just missed establishing it in California; we almost got it. And I was furious that we'd lost. I thought I would work on the health insurance issue back in Washington when I got there [inaudible] So there was this whole clique of people including Wilbur Cohen . . . and Boris Shishkin, and people who were sold on the idea of national compulsory health insurance. I'll admit that that Monday night group did shift a little bit according to the issue that was primarily being discussed. And health insurance was the thing that got me in there.

**Jarrell:** Well, how long had the group been meeting before the war?

**Wyckoff:** [inaudible] before the war. When we dropped health insurance and got into this other thing, well, we were so fascinated. Of course people like Boris Shishkin had a continuing labor agenda since the AFL and the CIO were concerned with everything that was going on—and so were Paul Sifton, and Jim Patton. These were national organizations who were doing what . . . There was the National Planning Association which is what Jim Patton was very instrumental in starting. In fact he was head of the whole darn thing. It was a group of people that got together to try to set a policy course for . . . I guess what you'd call the liberal democrat conference.



Jarrell: Right. An agenda.

Wyckoff: An agenda, yes. Something that they could take to the White House and say, "We have this much consensus on this subject, and this is what we'd like the administration to take the lead and push on." It was a way of funneling these issues into the White House; it was not so much direct work on the Hill; it was more an attempt to influence the decision-making and the direction in the White House.

Jarrell: You, the group met during the war years. Now I wonder how many terms had it been a group?

Wyckoff: I don't think very long. It might have been in an informal way in people's homes, you know, that sort of thing. In fact, as a matter of fact, it did meet occasionally in people's homes. Mainly we met at the Rogers Smith Hotel for some reason.

### Gardner Jackson

Jarrell: Tell me about Gardner Jackson during this period.

Wyckoff: Well, he was a very, very active and vigorous person. He was a strange man. You know he inherited a lot of money and spent it all on causes until he was flat broke. His causes were things like the problems of the mine workers, the problems of the farm workers, the problem of the auto workers. As a person . . . he was all over the lot; he was a newspaper man; he was a kind of a politician and he was a very creative person. He had a lot of imagination in the solving of social problems, and he was very inspiring and very interesting. We were very fond of him and went frequently to his home. There was another organization too called the Southern Conference, I remember.

Jarrell: Would you like to say a few words about the Southern Conference? Or sum up Jackson's and your work together?

Wyckoff: Changing the subject a bit . . . I don't know that there's any significance to it, but they absolutely would not permit Abe Fortas to join the committee. They just would not. I think they thought that he was not, they





thought that he might be anti-labor. I think that might have been [inaudible] Yes, but they didn't trust him. This group didn't trust him. Yes. Well, that was a very interesting group. Then there was another group which included Randolph Paul and Abe Fortas, and Tex Goldsmith and Elizabeth Wickenden.

**Jarrell:** What group was that? Did it have a formal existence, a name? What was its purpose?

**Wyckoff:** Well, it had to do with the Department of the Interior and all the land-use planning, the power division and the Reclamation Act, and the issue of the 160-acre limitation . . . and all of that. Abe and Carol Fortas of course were deeply involved in the Department of the Interior. And Tex Goldsmith was head of the power division. I'll group some of the people involved for you. Elizabeth Wickenden, Tex Goldsmith's wife, became head of—and still is as far as I know—the National Public Welfare Association, an enormously powerful and widely-based group of people which represented all the county welfare departments, all the Community Chest welfare activities. Elizabeth Wickenden is a brilliant woman and a very brilliant writer, an economist. Her value was in preparing testimony for legislative hearings which was just tremendous. She was a great advocate, and a great person really. She and Tex were a fascinating couple; we were very fond of them and spent a good deal of time together; they lived right near us in Georgetown. You can imagine how interesting the conversations were in the homes of people like this, 'cause Tex was head of the Power Division in the Department of the Interior with all the fights going on and the whole question of public power, you know. And he was a charming guy. They live in New York now. He went with the United Nations and became head of one of the technical assistance divisions.

Well, Randolph Paul was the general counsel of the U.S. Treasury Department. How . . . I guess I met him through Abe [Fortas] probably. Anyway, we became very fond of Randolph and Muriel Paul . . . they lived right near us too. And he was the guy that invented the short form . . .

**Jarrell:** (Laughter) Oh no.

**Wyckoff:** Yes.

**Jarrell:** The 1040? (Laughter)



**Wyckoff:** He invented the form 1040. He says it's a hell of a note doing all this, so we're going to have a short form, and he invented that. He was a great tax man. I was so fascinated by him and became fascinated about the subject of taxation policy, and what you could do to destroy people with taxes, you know. It suddenly dawned on me that the power to tax is the power to destroy. And that therefore you could be creative and encourage certain policies and do all sorts of things with taxes. I got so interested in that subject I read every book he ever wrote. I'm not a tax lawyer at all. I think Hubert got a little miffed, I was spending so much time studying and reading about taxes. He finally said, "You do the taxes. You know Randolph. You do the taxes; I'm not going to bother with the taxes anymore."

**Jarrell:** Oh. (Laughter)

**Wyckoff:** So I took my taxes and I went in to Randolph and said, "Now, Randolph, I've got Hubert mad and he wants me to do the 1040. How do I do this 1040 thing of yours that you've got here?" He said, "Don't ask me! I've never done my taxes." (Laughter) I was so amused. He said, "I couldn't possibly do my taxes. And I couldn't possibly do yours." So I said, "Well, that's a fine thing. Anybody selling it to Congress and not even able to do a simple little family tax." So we had a big joke over that. Anyway from then on I always did the taxes till we got to Watsonville. And we haven't, we didn't get thrown in jail yet anyway. Oh dear.

### William O. Douglas

**Wyckoff:** William O. Douglas . . . Bill Douglas was a very close friend of Abe Fortas and we saw him quite frequently at both Abe's house and at the Macauley's house. He had a really charming personality. He was fascinating to listen to. He could speak very well and very convincingly about things. And of course he had some pet things . . . he was a great conservationist and we were all very fond of him.

You know there was an episode, a moment there, where . . . I think Mrs. Roosevelt rather hoped that he would run for president. He was a candidate for president at one time. I know we were all hoping he would run; we thought he'd make a marvelous president. When he was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, we were all kind of sad, because we felt he was too young to be pulled out of the political arena, and be put in an ivory tower. I really think that it did kind of pull him apart. And he began to, you know,



chase around and do all kinds of things we didn't want him to do. He was a delightful man; we all loved him. Now let's see . . .

John and Kate Edelman . . . they were fascinating people. A brilliant family, and the children (John and Kate are both dead now), the children are all brilliant people. They were very active. John was responsible really for the longest period of time for the organization of the textile workers in the south. It was a terribly hard job. Anyway John became head of the National Consumer's Union Board and was for many years.

Esther Cole Franklin was the executive director of the American Association of University Women. She was another one who was an excellent preparer of testimony on any subject. She was a damn good economist and did her research well and was somebody they would listen to.

Jarrell: They respected her.

Wyckoff: They respected her. They haven't had anybody quite as good as that, I think, for a long time. She was also on the National Consumers Advisory Committee to the OPA (Office of Price Administration), which I was on, too. That was a fascinating experience. Did I say anything about that?

Jarrell: Yes, you did. What I'm trying to figure out, Florence, is this—I know about many of these different activities you were involved in when you were in Washington, and I assume that they were simultaneous. Is that correct?

Wyckoff: Yes. Yes, it's correct. They were simultaneous. They had to be; I was really only there a short time. (Laughter)

Jarrell: I know. But I mean you really filled those years incredibly full.

Wyckoff: Oh, they were full, there's no doubt about that.

Jarrell: I mean I could just see you running from one . . . back and forth, you know.

Wyckoff: Yes, that's right. That's right. They were very full. We spent a vast amount of time of course doing things over the phone. You had to. Going down these national organizations that were sort of working together on this,



(list some of the issues) and I thought this would help you a little to get a feel of this thing.

Olya Margolin still is the head of the National Council of Jewish Women and was then. That's quite a while. She was, she has been, for just how many years I don't know, their Washington, ringside-seat observer, lobbyist, and voice and housekeeper, in arranging all the testimony and does all the chores that have to be done. She's a wonderful fixture back there.

### Monsignor John O'Grady

**Wyckoff:** Well, when I was head of the Community Services Division of the State Relief Administration, this great tall, gaunt man, Monsignor John O'Grady suddenly walked in the door—he spoke with a brogue you could cut with a knife—and said, "Now I've come in here to study what you're doing. Can you explain it to me?" I said, "Well, sit down. I'll try to explain what I'm doing." He told me he wanted to go out and see the farm workers' conditions, and could I arrange it for him. (Laughter)

**Jarrell:** Like a tour.

**Wyckoff:** I said, "Yes." I turned to a young Irishman, William G. Reidy, who was in the office, who became the A.A. for Lister Hill later, who was then just a kid out of law school . . . I said, "Bill, I think it would be nice if you would take Monsignor O'Grady on a tour of all the Farm Security camps and the various people that we know who are interested in the conditions of the farm workers in California. Will you do that?" So the old man picked up his skirts and said, "We're ready to go now." (Laughter) So Bill phoned his wife and said, "I won't be back," and started off.

He came back a week later completely exhausted. He said, "That man wouldn't let me sleep. He wanted to go night and day. He never stopped. He would go into a State Relief Office . . . he'd stand at the end of a line of the recipients and he'd walk up with the recipients, and say to the person at the window, "Now what is this form you're filling out here? Why don't you do it any faster?" (Laughter) Then he'd get in the office and get around and say, "Now what happens to this form? Where does it go from you?" And he'd go on up through the whole office until he got to the director of welfare. Then he'd say, "Do you realize the motion of this piece of paper—how long it takes to process—and there's this hungry fellow sitting out in the line there?"





(Laughter) God, he was incredible, that man. Well everybody just adored him. Incidentally, he swore like a trooper; he really he was an amazing old guy. But he would do that. He didn't like bureaucracy and he would try to blow it down and stir it up and make it do things for people. But you can imagine what a great person he was as a witness to testify. He was very colorful. And he had the facts of what happened to a person at the end of the line, you know. He knew.

**Jarrell:** He had followed it all the way.

**Wyckoff:** Yes, he knew. And it didn't matter to him whether they were Catholic or not. It was a public organization that wasn't functioning right, you know, and he was in there pitching on it. Yes, he was a really great man.

Well, Monsignor John O'Grady was on the board of Food for Freedom too and he would come to the meetings and really report some things that would stir us up. I'll never forget one night . . . I don't know what it was that . . . we were both invited to some very important banquet for somebody for something . . . well, I don't remember exactly what it was. Anyway, it was a rainy, terrible night, and I found myself taking Monsignor John O'Grady to the party. I went and picked him up and drove him across the town in the rain and everything. He turned to me and said, "You know, I've come to the conclusion that no good comes out of an institution." I said, "What? For a man who was head of the National Council of Catholic Charities, how can you say that?" "Well," he said, "it's the truth. No good comes out of an institution." I never have got over that remark. We always had the greatest conversations . . . he would love to sort of turn everything upside down, and argue, argue from the wrong end to try to test you to see what you did. Well, he was a very interesting person from the National Council of Catholic Charities.

James G. Patton, head of the National Farmers Union . . . he's still very active. He calls me occasionally; he lives in San Mateo now. And he's, still very . . . he's the retired president of the National Farmers Union. And there's a man who ought to be interviewed. Whew! Yes. He would be a magnificent person to interview. Oh, the Farmers Union is a tremendous organization. Yes, they had a ringside seat . . . maybe you can get Jim to tell you something about that Monday night group. (Laughter) He'd call it the National Planning Association Sub-Committee, I imagine.

Nelson finally became the head of it and Boris gave it up, gave up the specialty, you might say. But Boris was the one who had to work with us to



try to get the AF of L, guys like Matthew Wohl and the rest, to let the farm workers get in under Social Security; that was one of the things we worried about.

Jarrell: They'd been excluded from everything?

### Abolition of Farm Security Camps

Wyckoff: Everything. To get them included under the legislation, this was one of the jobs which we were really trying to do then . . . to get the Fair Labor Standards Act broadened to cover, to get the amendments through, to cover child labor . . . we worked awfully hard on that. Well, the FSA camps were all over the United States, of course.

Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: What happened was that the Farm Bureau Federation tried during the days of the War Food Administration to abolish Farm Security . . . and they would have succeeded if it hadn't been for Mrs. M.E. Tilley then who actually made this thing [inaudible.] they wanted Farm Security in it [inaudible] because they didn't want the small farmer protected with subsidies this way . . . they wanted to allow the big farmer in there, you know. The Farm Bureau had a policy that was very anti-small farmer. Well . . . what did I start out . . . and then I lost the thread all of a sudden . . .

Jarrell: You were telling me about the fate of the farm security camps . . .

Wyckoff: Yes. The fate of the camps. Well, what . . . the second step was that when Farm Security was abolished, War Food Administration took them over and set up a system of turning them over to groups of growers. And the groups of growers would simply form a non-profit organization and control these camps and run them.

They could do whatever they wanted with them. They could keep the clinics or abolish the clinics. They could close them down altogether. Or they could do whatever they liked. And most of the growers discovered that it was a hell of a headache to try to run those things. So the Farm Security camps in a great many states, including our own in California, were given over to the local housing authority, who were glad to get them because it gave them what they called an asset. That was some financial benefit to them in terms of matching



grants and all this sort of thing which has to do with federal funds. And the difficulty was that the Farm Security camps had been heavily subsidized.

Jarrell: Always.

Wyckoff: And when the camps were given to the growers, there was nothing, so they had to put up some of the money, and you know how much they'd put up. So they were very reluctant to do anything, and they got into a terrible state of disrepair. When they went to the housing authorities, there was no subsidy then either.

Jarrell: They just got the bare . . .

Wyckoff: They just got the bare ground, that was all. And there was no subsidy to do anything with them.

Jarrell: Right.

Wyckoff: Finally, the OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] set up the migrant Title II division, and under that, a subsidy for housing was permitted. And then the California Office of Employment was given the job of . . . well, they had a thing called the Migrant Master Plan . . . we'll get into this a little later when we get into the Conference on Families who follow the crops. Anyway, the subsidy came back then through the OEO, and it was possible to refurbish the camps and get them a little better up to standards. Although it's still very . . . I mean, we now in Watsonville have, I'm told, the best one in the whole state.

Jarrell: Really.

Wyckoff: Which . . . ours is new, you know, ours wasn't built until . . . well there was no farm security camp here . . . the nearest one was . . . and so there was very little around here. The big ones were all over in San Joaquin Valley.

### Washington, D.C. Diary Entries

Jarrell: This is an excerpt read by Mrs. Wyckoff from a diary that she kept in 1944.



Wyckoff: January 17—I returned today from the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organization) Political Action Committee in New York. I had dinner with Walter Reuther.<sup>25</sup> He told the story of the fourteen months he spent in the USSR in 1933 helping teach Russians how to make machine tools to build Ford automobiles. They made a hundred years progress in fourteen months. The Russians are fighting for the chance to continue that great technological surge which they attribute, of course, to their communist system. He told the story of a competition between shops to make efficiency records and excel each other in "cultural advancement."

Against the advice of the commissars, he and his brother, Victor Reuther, insisted on eating with the workers in their own restaurant instead of in the special new restaurant for foreign workers. Their restaurant was equipped with bowls and wooden spoons. He described the metal spoons in America to the workers and the Russian workers decided that it would be a good sign of cultural advancement for the competition to make some metal spoons. So they asked the commissar to let them make metal spoons. He refused saying that the light consumer goods would come later; Ford automobiles would come first.

Victor and Walter saw how disappointed the workers were, so they offered to make a set of spoons and called for volunteers to work after hours. Many volunteered. They used old discarded scrap metal and made a crude set of rough spoons out of iron. They were not properly finished and would cut your mouth around the edges, but the Russians thought they were wonderful. After the first great meal, half of the spoons disappeared; they were stolen. The commissar called a big meeting and said he was very disappointed to see that after they had made a great cultural advancement, they lost ground by reverting to the capitalist practice of stealing. So he ordered all the men shot who didn't bring the stolen spoons back. All the spoons came back. Then they weren't taking any more chances. So each morning, each worker was given his spoon when he checked in at the gate. And gave it up at night. The shop they were competing with to show cultural advancement asked for

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<sup>25</sup>Walter Reuther was a prominent labor official who organized the United Auto Workers West Side Local 174 in 1935 and served as President of the UAW from 1946 until his death in 1970—Editor.





ten days more time to show their progress. In ten days time the commissars were called to see the results. The shop was covered with thousands of potted palms . . . that was their idea of showing culture. The palms were set in rows up and down the beltlines in the factories. That is the story Walter Reuther told at that dinner. Then at the CIO Political Action Committee, I heard a man named Schwartz, an officer from the US Merchant Marine who spent five months in Murmansk, tell about an old woman who was put to work sewing broken flour sacks on the dock near his ship. She stole a few handfuls of flour and ate a little. A guard caught her and took her out on the dock in front of the ship in full view and shot her. He said the NMU [National Maritime Union] comrades were all through with communism after five months in Murmansk. He said the movie, "The Great Wall" played for four months and was the only movie in Archangel. Ninety percent of the diet there is black bread, three percent is cabbage; there is plenty of vodka. Everyone has steel teeth.

Yes. I thought these were interesting little sidelights [from my diary.] R. F. Thomas, Walter Reuther, Phil Murray all agreed to give Food for Freedom a hand to help with the organization. I went up there to try to get their backing.

### SETTLING IN WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA: 1946 Continuing the Battle for Agricultural Workers The Minimum Wage for Agricultural Workers

Wyckoff: I was a member of the National Consumers League as you remember, and when I came back after the war to California, I tried to carry on the work I had been doing before and also to carry on the connections I had made in the East. The National Consumers League was important to me. I was one of their few California representatives willing to testify before such organizations as the California State Industrial Welfare Commission. In 1946 I testified on the minimum wage. At that time, I tried to make a strong argument in favor of the Industrial Welfare Commission being given the responsibility for setting wages for agricultural workers. Here's a little quote from my testimony:

During the war agricultural employers have for the most part been able to pay good wages and they've made very good money. Is it unreasonable to ask that agricultural employers now take their place alongside other employers in this country in paying



their own way and standing on their own feet? As taxpayers and consumers we remembered not so long ago the days when it was necessary to pay out a huge subsidy to agriculture in the form of relief appropriations to take care of the seasonally unemployed farm worker whose miserable wages were rarely enough to tide him over from one job to the next job. Now's the time to take such steps as are necessary to prevent the return to that tragic and costly situation. The setting of a floor under farm wages as we have under farm prices is surely a step in the right direction. We cannot continue to maintain the agricultural employers as a special privileged class immune from the social responsibilities shouldered by other employers. It is too costly both in taxes and in social values. We should not tolerate sweatshop conditions in agriculture any more than in the rest of industry. It is particularly important for us in California to face this fact because our community life nearly everywhere is deeply affected by conditions in one of our largest industries, namely agriculture.

Then I included a long quote from agricultural economist Paul S. Taylor in my testimony:

Well, among all the countries I have known where there was an agricultural labor force it was the universal desire to settle down on a piece of land and become a part of a community; to get the children in school; to join the church; to have a chance to vote. But it takes a little money to do this. What happened to prevent so many families from settling down? A study of a thousand rural shacktown residents made by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, now shredded, showed that of workers who came to California in the '30s with an average of [inaudible] in their pocket they had accumulated by 1939, after an average of five years' work in California fields, a further savings of \$140 per family. This \$23 per year was of course not all cash, but total assets. How many lifetimes would it take to accumulate the \$5,000 capital the University of California Agricultural Extension Service considers necessary to finance a small farm in California? What chance is there for a hired hand to settle down and raise his family in a normal, American way? What's going to happen to the next generation? Can the children get a start under these conditions of endless migration?<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>We are unable to provide citation for this quotation—Editor.



Then I continued:

In a recent study conducted by the National Child Labor Committee, thirty-one percent of the children were reported as not enrolled in school during the period when school was in session. By the time migrant children reach the age of fourteen, only one in seven was at his proper level; the remainder retarded one or more years. From the standpoint of human values, this situation can't be condoned. Surely we can make the effort to bring back into full economic and social citizenship this large group of Americans. The minimum wage is not the whole answer—money isn't everything, but it counts. It helps make possible chances for a real home and place in the community. A chance for the children to stay in school and the women to stay home if they want to. I don't have to tell you that the living wage is the best protection of the family. On behalf of the National Consumers League, I therefore urge the Industrial Welfare Commission to use its powers under the law to extend that protection to the women and children in agriculture and domestic service who are unprotected.

I included domestic service, too.

Jarrell: This was in 1946?

Wyckoff: Yes.

Jarrell: Before the California State Industrial Welfare Commission.

Wyckoff: You're right.

Jarrell: Okay. I want today to have a major focus, to discuss primarily the shifting focus which I discern in your activities after the war. That there is a definite altering not of your interests as such, but the way that you chose to formulate them and the means by which you chose to work at these issues.



## Back to California: Settling in Watsonville

**Wyckoff:** Well I think that in coming back to California, I was not coming back to a big city, I was coming back to a small town, to Watsonville, and I had never lived in a small rural town. Now that is a big change. San Francisco is a big city; Washington was a bigger city, and I was a city girl. And I was going to make a really heroic effort to try to become a part of a rural community. I had talked about rural communities all my life; I had talked about migrant workers. I had done all these things, but I had never lived among them. In other words, the chips were down, and this was it. I was going to have to figure out how to get into this community and become a part of it. Well, I came down to Watsonville, and we didn't even give up our house in San Francisco. I would commute back and forth for about oh, four years, I think, we kept that apartment in San Francisco.

**Jarrell:** On Vallejo Street?

**Wyckoff:** On Vallejo. We never gave it up. We'd go up and use it as a little place to stay. I kept my connections with the State Office of the California Conference of Social Work, and . . . a lot of these reports that I've kept over the years show that I was trying to interpret a rural community to them.

Well, the first question was how to get into things. I was an old member of the YWCA, so I went down and joined the board of the YWCA in Watsonville, which was a totally different thing from San Francisco. They had little copper classes and little . . . (laughter) . . . they were frightened to death of anything controversial. I remember some old lady saying to me, "Well, we can't talk about health insurance because that's controversial." I realized that the whole world had made a tremendous change and that these dear ladies who were on that board were the 100 years-before-type of little Victorian do-gooders. I learned quite a bit about that. I joined the Grange. And that was an experience.

**Jarrell:** Tell me about that. Now was this the Watsonville-Corralitos Grange?

**Wyckoff:** The Corralitos Grange. One of the reasons I joined it was that the Farm Bureau was obviously the big voice of the big farmer.

**Jarrell:** Yes.





**Wyckoff:** And I had got the impression in Washington and in California that the Grange was a small farmer organization. I thought, well, I'd like to do that. I got into the Grange and of course it's one of those ritual organizations so I thought I was back as a freshman in college going all through these strange initiations and things. I tried very hard to be a good member. But I found that they were not even faintly interested in the kinds of things that either Hubert or I had to offer. So we drifted away, and they felt kind of sad about it I think, and were always very eager to have us come back. But we kind of slipped out of it because it just . . .

**Jarrell:** It's a social organization now . . .

**Wyckoff:** Well, it was. It was for people who needed a little rural potluck supper to get together.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** And one of those little organizations that could do that for them, and we wanted more . . .

**Jarrell:** It had changed since the late nineteenth century.

**Wyckoff:** I guess so, yes. It surely had. Well it really was a strange experience.

### The TB Association and Public Health in Santa Cruz

**Wyckoff:** Then I joined the TB Association. And *that* was the thing, that was where things really began to happen. The TB Association at that time was run by Alice Earl Wilder who was the Executive Secretary.

Alice Earl Wilder was a remarkable woman. She was the daughter of Guy Earl of the Earl Fruit Company, and they had interests in, oh, I think, power companies, ranches all up and down the San Joaquin Valley. My father played golf every day with Guy Earl at the Claremont Country Club [in Berkeley], so I knew a lot about him and the background of the family. Alice Earl should have been a man. She is an amazing person. She raised a large family, and I guess her husband must have done most of the housework . . . because I don't think she ever missed a day at the meeting of the Santa Cruz County Board of



Supervisors. But for a long time she ran the TB Association . . . and one of her classmates I think was Leslie Ganyard who was Executive Director of the Rosenberg Foundation. Alice finally thought that we needed a TB x-ray truck to go around the county and x-ray people. In those days, the x-ray was considered to be the main service of the TB Association; that was how you went about case finding. The way you did that was to go around with these x-ray trucks; first of all you used little films and then if they were suspicious, you sent the patient for big 14" x 17" films. So we wanted this new truck which was quite an investment; a truck with that x-ray machine and operators in it. Alice went up to San Francisco to Leslie, and Leslie said, "All right. You may have the truck; we will finance the truck; but you must accept a health educator to go with it." Well, this was a challenge, I think . . . anyway, Alice accepted the health educator.<sup>27</sup>

Jarrell: Why was it a little threatening?

Wyckoff: Well, she wouldn't be totally in charge; there would be somebody who was more of a professional . . .

Jarrell: And an expert in this.

Wyckoff: And an expert in this.

Jarrell: Yes, I see.

Wyckoff: Well now I think she was a little startled, but she took it anyway. That was the start of my interest in, really it was the start of my opportunity to get involved in many things here. Now I have some very good stories of how this all began which are much better put in these papers I've gathered together, than I can tell you. And I was wondering is there any reason why I can't read these into the record.

Jarrell: No. Fine.

Wyckoff: Okay. I'll read this [section] from my 1948 reporting to the Conference of Social Work

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<sup>27</sup>Alice Earl Wilder died October 24, 1988—Editor.



In the past the people of Santa Cruz County have been willing to give generously to a volunteer health agency for which they felt some responsibility. But the sense that the health department belongs to them as taxpayers has been very slow in developing. For example, in 1937, the County's first budget for a health department was \$45. That year the TB Association raised about \$1700 and paid the salary of a clerk for the health department. In 1939, the County paid for the clerk and the TB Association paid the salary of a nurse for the Health Department. Finally the County took over the salary of the nurse and so on with the private agency trying to meet the needs of the County, and after the demonstration of its value, the County rather reluctantly took over its public responsibility.

In 1947, the TB Association decided to try a new approach. They asked the State Department of Public Health to send down a trained expert to make a survey of the public health services in the County. Mr. Von Allman was sent and made his report in April of that year. He found that we had a very inadequate health department. We had a part-time health officer who could give almost no time to the work of the department because he also was responsible for all the medical care in a 175-bed county hospital, plus outpatient clinics and emergency care, day and night. (Laughter) He had only three nurses on the staff. And counting all the school nurses, we had only one nurse per 12,000 people. We had one sanitarian. The total amount spent on public health at this time in the County, counting Federal, State, and local funds, was 38¢ per capita. This skimpy budget made it impossible for the small staff with all their earnest efforts to come anywhere near meeting the health needs of the County.

Mr. Von Allman's report laid out the facts and made the recommendations as to where improvements were needed to meet adequate standards. Copies of the report were distributed to the Board of Supervisors and a few extra were given to the board members of the TB Association. A summary of the report and recommendations was run in the press. The public read this and turned the page and forgot about it. There was hardly a ripple caused at the time. Like many worthwhile studies it began to gather dust on the shelves . . . not because it was not competently



done, but because the meaning of it hadn't been brought home to each individual citizen, so nothing much happened.<sup>28</sup>

### The Beginnings of Health Planning in the County

**Wyckoff:** In the meantime, another project of the TB Association was developing. At their request, a grant was made by the Rosenberg Foundation to provide a health educator for two years to the health department; then things began to happen. I want to give you in some detail the steps taken in this case because I believe it demonstrates the effective way to locate the unmet needs of a community and furthermore to get something done about them. First, two small planning committees were set up at each end of the county. They were composed of civic-minded persons who were well-liked and respected, and whose predominating characteristics were the ability to work in a group and who knew and understood the community. They agreed that a county-wide health survey made by a large citizen group rather than by a single expert might produce better public understanding of the real health needs of our county.

It was decided that the group should not be dominated or controlled by any one organization, either the Health Department, the TB Association or any other agency or interest. These two planning committees approached the heads of about five large organizations in the county with the names of people who would form the survey committee. After considerable consultation and work the health survey committees were set up. They were composed of about fifty people in each end of the county. ninety-eight percent of them were laymen, the rest were doctors. It was a good cross section of the whole community. There were bank presidents and heads of industry, and labor people of all kinds.

With the help and guidance of our health educator we took the APHA (American Public Health Association) evaluation schedule and revised it to suit our needs and broke it down into about twenty sets of questionnaires. These dealt with such subjects as communicable disease, child health, maternal health, water, sanitation, housing, milk, and food handling. These were given out to small survey subcommittees to collect the information. It was not required that any worker have a specialized knowledge, but only that he'd be interested enough to take the job. It was amazing to see how many people in a previously uninterested community were willing to be of service.

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<sup>28</sup>This statement is included in file, "Speeches and Talks" in Wyckoff Archive—Editor.





The jobs were specific and the data when there were any at all were not difficult to find. Yes, Mrs. Mary Jane Neal, the health educator, helped a great deal in teaching people how to use data, and to choose sources.

**Jarrell:** She was your consultant?

**Wyckoff:** Yes, she was the health educator. She helped in teaching where to look in the library; how to go to the county records; where to go in the state; where to find things, which was very helpful. Once you learn how to dig this material out, you could move ahead on your own. When it came to interpreting the data, she was there to also give us a little help in knowing all the aspects that should be taken into consideration. So we weren't making simple-minded decisions.

The information assembled by the survey may not have been as complete or as accurate as the survey made by a trained expert. But what was much more important, the basic issues became understood by a large cross section of all the citizens who could not speak about them in their homes and to their friends from firsthand knowledge. Aside from the actual data collected, there were two important things accomplished by the survey. In the course of the work, the members of the committee got more and more interested in finding out about the existing health laws and their enforcement, or lack of it. As chairman of the Water and Sanitation Committee, I can tell you I certainly had my eyes opened. It was called the "Sewage Committee." As we brought in our materials to report at the joint meetings of the whole committee, we began to see clearly the extraordinary interrelationship of these health problems. For example, we saw that communicable disease related to sanitation and to housing in many cases. Here we began to see what needed to be done and to get some ideas of priorities.

All during the survey, the play-by-play account of the work ran for weeks in the papers.

**Jarrell:** Really.

**Wyckoff:** There was a plainly growing public demand that something be done to correct conditions that were hazardous to health. The newspapers cooperated marvelously. They attended and covered committee meetings, and they really were alert to what was going on in both ends of the county, which is really remarkable.



Jarrell: Both newspapers in the county? So there was definite support.

Wyckoff: It was rather interesting . . . we had to take sometimes a sports reporter and train him to the vocabulary of health and all of these things that we were considering, and some of these issues were quite technical. Once the reporters got interested they tried so hard to follow through and stick with us, and the editors allowed them to do this. This was one of the most important things. They were allowed to follow a committee and we were not sent a different reporter every time because it wasn't convenient, which is what they often do now.

### The Pajaro Valley Health Council

Wyckoff: In 1948, the surveyors then reorganized themselves into permanent health councils, one in the Pajaro Valley and one in Santa Cruz. They took up the work of making our county a healthier, cleaner place to live in. We have been at it ever since with varying degrees of success. To give you a little idea of progress, our per capita expenditure from health went from 38¢ to \$1.00 within one year after the formation of the health council. It is now up to \$1.25. We got a full-time health officer, four more nurses, two more sanitarians, and though we may still be below some standards, our health services have improved enormously.

This was not all accomplished without some difficulties. The Board of Supervisors was composed of very cautious people who didn't like being pushed ahead so fast; they didn't want to spend money. They blamed the health educator for this sudden uproar and for making them feel so uncomfortable; so they chopped her head off at the first opportunity and fired her. Only recently, in 1978, were we able to get one back in the health department.

Jarrell: But I thought that she was . . . the first two years anyway . . . she was being sponsored by the Rosenberg Foundation.

Wyckoff: Yes, that was true . . . so that the county didn't have to pay for her.

Jarrell: But then . . .



**Wyckoff:** But then when it came time to put her on the county payroll, they fired her. It was very hard to find good health officers for our low salary. So we had a succession of different men and very little continuity. This was a real test for the Health Councils . . . we had to go it alone without our health educator and without much help from the health officer. It was fortunate that we weren't too dependent. We have always had excellent cooperation from the overworked staff of the department on any technical questions that were too much for us. And we have constantly bothered the life out of the State Health Department when we couldn't get answers locally. In spite of these handicaps, the Pajaro Valley Health Council steadily grew and became a vital part of the community. It absorbed some other smaller organizations with related purposes because it was recognized as a more effective working instrument. The secret of its vigor lies in the fact that there were quite a few active subcommittees working on filling the genuine needs of the community. It was not a social gathering with a few entertaining speakers, but a real working group.

### Social Issues and Problems Addressed by PVHC

**Wyckoff:** Aside from the improvements in the health department, we have accomplished some interesting things. Perhaps the most significant example of the work of the council was the formation of the case work committees in 1952. It may seem a little remote to you from the functions of the Health Council, but we regarded ourselves as free to step out and do what we can to improve the social conditions of the people. It became apparent that there was a great lack of understanding between the workers of the various public health, welfare, and educational agencies handling children as to what service each had to offer.

### Children and Youth

**Wyckoff:** This was particularly apparent in cases involving mental, emotional, or behavior problems . . . so our mental hygiene subcommittee proposed a plan of asking all the public agency representatives in Watsonville to meet regularly to discuss their more difficult cases, and jointly to plan for these cases using all the services needed to solve the problems. This group was composed of the public health nurse, the county welfare worker, the police chief, the district attorney, the schoolchild guidance and attendance officer, the probation officer, and the juvenile judge. Only professional workers were asked to participate in this. The chairman, Dr. Ruth Frary, was a pediatrician who had public health training and who had formerly been head



of a mental hygiene society. The Health Council did not take any part in these meetings. It merely acted as the agent to convene the group and start them out. Then it cut them loose completely. Since the formation of the case work committees, the attitude of suspicion and lack of cooperation based upon misunderstanding has disappeared, to a great extent, among these various professional workers. In planning together they have given each other help and have been able to serve their family cases much better. There are not so many duplicating visits, not so many conflicting plans, and the whole process of using our limited services to the best advantage has improved. Best of all, it has improved the attitude of each service worker toward the job through eliminating much of the frustration and sense of insecurity that grew out of the piece-meal approach to a family problem.

### Establishing the Visiting Nurse Association

**Wyckoff:** Another project the Health Council undertook was the formation of a visiting nurse association. This was also a separate group apart from the Health Council, but it sent representatives to our meetings. They conducted a drive and raised the money for a visiting nurse association and service. You know, Hubert and Edward Pfingst were incorporators of it in the beginning.

### The Milk Pasteurization Ordinance

**Wyckoff:** Another accomplishment was the Milk Pasteurization Ordinance requiring the pasteurization of all milk and oh, that was so hard to get through. The farmers here did not want it. They thought they ought to have their little raw milk. But, of course, it took a disaster—the death of a very fine man over in Rio Del Mar who was a newly-returned veteran from the navy, and he was killed by brucellosis from raw milk. And it was directly due to a lack of pasteurization. His death was what triggered the passage of the ordinance. The supervisors were very resistant because they wanted the support of the farmers.

**Jarrell:** Oh because of that interest group . . . certainly.

**Wyckoff:** The Farm Bureau and all the rest of them were against pasteurization, you know.

**Jarrell:** I haven't gone back and looked at the newspaper accounts, but was there quite a battle over this issue?

**Wyckoff:** Yes, there certainly was. I can remember going into the meetings and there were actually farmers in there with rakes and hoes pounding on the floor . . . it was really something.

**Jarrell:** But despite all of that opposition, it was passed.





**Wyckoff:** It went through, yes. The scandal was so great over the death of this man. And the Health Council didn't let matters rest, you know. I mean everybody said, "What about the death of a veteran?" and kept things going.

**Jarrell:** And what about the newspapers?

**Wyckoff:** Oh, they picked it up, yes. A Food Handlers Ordinance was passed, requiring a (TB) x-ray of all food handlers, and a tightening up of the inspection and licensing of restaurants. And a new sanitary garbage dump for the city was legislated—that was a great achievement—a cut-and-fill garbage dump—oh what rats we used to have. And another one for the rural area with a regular garbage collection. A rat extermination program. And we got also a pretty complete immunization program.

On some of these programs we had worked jointly with the Santa Cruz Health Council, and on some we had worked alone. But in any case we had really seen some changes made for the better. The Health Council raises no money. It operates on \$1 per year dues from members. All we need are a few penny postcards and a lot of good volunteer workers. All of our committees are composed of laymen, with professional workers acting as consultants only. The agency workers are never asked to act as spokesmen. We are not a very belligerent group. Over the years we have found that just the fact of our vigilance and interest tends to move things forward . . . many times without the necessity of a big campaign. We stand for certain principles and we will back any agency and any city father or supervisor that will go forward on these principles. Well I thought that might give you a clue . . .

**Jarrell:** I think that is an excellent summary of the kinds of activities . . . that the Health Council has engaged in.

**Wyckoff:** It's still in existence, yes.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** Here in South Santa Cruz County it has been transformed into what's called the Pajaro Valley Community Council, because it covers after all a wider range than just the field of health.

**Jarrell:** A wider focus, yes.

**Wyckoff:** I feel though that it has degenerated into a luncheon club with nice, easy speakers. It does not have the action subcommittees that it used to have that were focused around getting a specific task done. It's very easy for things to slide into a lethargy like that. There have been of course more vigorous groups rising up through the activities of the . . . the Economic Opportunity Act and this kind of thing. So the scene has changed a little. However the last president of the Council was also past president of the



Economic Opportunity group here. So that, I mean, there is a connection . . . it isn't just like the Woman's Club or something like that.

### **The Influence of the Coordinating Council Movement**

**Jarrell:** So you did find ways way of working from the bottom up, instead of from the top down; that this was grass roots community organization.

**Wyckoff:** It was during the time of the coordinating council movement, the community council movement (in the 1960s) . . . there was a nationwide sort of community work wave in all the schools of social work and public health and this sort of thing; it was just beginning to move and was almost like a fad. It became very popular. Everybody was always trying to start up something . . . unfortunately these councils that they set up, coordinating community councils, were not like the one I've just described because they were made up of the staff of official agencies, rather than simply citizens who got together occasionally. But for the working level of people to get together, or for the citizens to get together, and make a survey and find out what's going on. . . What's needed . . . and yes . . . where are the gaps, and what issues need to be explored . . . that sort of thing. This was really unusual.

I think I can say that it was specifically this reporting at length and in depth to the California Conference of Social Work, to the various organizations that asked me to speak . . . I don't remember who they all were now. But they were platforms in which I was telling this story about a community's efforts at this kind of work.

### **Prostitution**

**Wyckoff:** I was chairman of the local Health Council at one time, although usually we had a minister. Our ministers, however, got shot down because we kept trying to close the houses of ill-repute on Union Street in Watsonville and cooperate with the military which was trying also to cut down on VD. And our town was not considered a very good place for soldiers. It was a most extraordinary thing how the minister would receive offers of double the salary and a great job either in Boston or Seattle or someplace, so they would leave. The financial pressure evidently was too great, and they left town—that's all. So those of us who dug our heels in and stayed were not shot down, we were given a cold shoulder or given a hard time by some of these people who wanted to run things so that that kind of business would go on. I remember facing a district attorney who refused to close the redlight district when the U.S. Army (at Fort Ord) declared us off-bounds. I said to him, "Why won't you close these places instead of just overlooking this." He said "Because you don't understand that those women are protecting you."



Jarrell: What an argument!

Wyckoff: That was his argument. "Well," I said, "I guess we'll just have to go another way." So we could not get him to cooperate. Finally what made him cooperate was when the U.S. Army at Fort Ord absolutely made the place off-bounds to the troops and that cut the merchants' income. And then the girls moved to San Juan Bautista. So . . . we didn't accomplish a great deal there.

### Closing a Local Labor Camp

Wyckoff: In fact, some of our great accomplishments turned out to have side-effects that were more difficult than we ever anticipated. For example, the closing of the Wall Street Court labor camp where we found so many cases of tuberculosis among the children. That place was so terrible the children would come to school with rat bites all over their faces. They would be infested with lice. The place was incredibly bad. We had a national housing committee during (President) Truman's administration that came out here and investigated labor housing in Watsonville, and they said in their report that they thought we had the worst housing in America.

Jarrell: No, really?

Wyckoff: Yes. And mind you, the Health Council knew this. So that was one time we really staged a campaign.

Jarrell: Now that's saying a lot . . . I mean to say the worst in the country.

Wyckoff: Yes.

Jarrell: Not in the state . . . in the country.

Wyckoff: The man who owned it was chairman of the Community Chest, and was a great pillar of virtue. Well, we decided that the only thing to do was to tackle that one head-on. And we faced this owner with the threat of a complete exposure of the fact that he was running this thing at a profit. He claimed, "Oh, I didn't know the conditions were bad. I didn't know this." Well, anyway, we finally got him to demolish the place and turn it into a parking lot. But the result of that was that those families were forced to leave the community because there was no alternative housing for them. We've always had a terribly tight housing situation particularly when the crop season is on. Closing a family camp was used as an argument for supporting the Bracero Program—a single man labor supply. So we went from the frying pan into the fire.



## THE GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

**Wyckoff:** Well, the net result of all this was that Dr. Dorothy Nyswander and Mary Jane Neal, who was our health educator, and Anne Haynes, who was coming up to succeed Dorothy Nyswander as head of the Health Education Division of the State Public Health Department, were watching this whole thing in Watsonville with a great deal of interest, because to them it was a little test-tube experiment of their theories . . . and it was a more vigorous one because it was not captive of either the medical society, the health department, the Community Chest, or any of the old set ways of forming a council and doing token citizen action; this was sort of real citizen action, and it was very vigorous.

Well, I think what happened was that the word went upstairs to Dr. Wilton Halverson, State Director of Public Health, that he should nominate someone to represent, not the health department, but the *idea* of community health activities on the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth. Governor Earl Warren at that time was putting together his second team . . . the first team was '44.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** I came back from Washington, D.C., you see, and this was during his second term, in '46 or '47. Anyway, Dr. Halverson got my name through Dr. Dorothy Nyswander and Anne Haynes. He sent my name in to Governor Warren and lo and behold, I received a letter asking me if I'd be willing to serve on the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth. Well! I was dumbfounded.

**Jarrell:** It really came as quite a surprise.

**Wyckoff:** It was a great surprise. I really . . .

**Jarrell:** It was rather a novel appointment for those days.

**Wyckoff:** Well, I was very puzzled by it; I went up and talked to Dr. Halverson. I asked him what he expected me to do and what was the purpose of this thing. "Well, he said, "I think it would be good for you to go on doing what you're doing and interpret it". "But," he said, "this Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth is advisory *to* the Governor; it has no status as an operating entity. It has no powers except its ability to advise the Governor and to draw people together to solve problems and to do research and this kind of thing."





## The Living Conditions of Rural Children

**Wyckoff:** He said to me, "Go around the state and take a look, and see what the condition of rural children is. And bring back to your committee a report on what you find and I think the Governor will listen." So . . . now I took this very seriously. I hardly saw my husband for days on end, now and then, as I explored the state.

Of course I had previously had a great interest in the whole *Grapes of Wrath* problem during the 1930s through my work in the State Relief Administration and Farm Security and work with rural counties during the depression. So I knew where there was likely to be a great need for investigation. It so happened just about that same time, 1948, I wrote the story in the little pamphlet, published by the National Conference on Social Work while I was an officer of the California Conference of Social Work, I think at the same time then. I'd like to give a little background on the community organization movement throughout the state at that time.

**Jarrell:** Why don't you do that as a way of illuminating what your interest was.

**Wyckoff:** This was an attempt in 1950 to explain to a local body what the Governor's Advisory Committee was all about. I thought this might be helpful . . . I just want to find it among my papers and here's a very quick explanation and history of what the Governor's Advisory Committee was all about:

The Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth was set up during the war to deal with the emergency war-time problems of young people. At first it was advisory only to the Governor on matters affecting the Youth Authority. It worked hard on the problems of the prevention of juvenile delinquency and on the rehabilitation of young people in trouble in wartime. The committee in 1950 had been in existence about six years and in that time had come to realize the broad scope of the problems of young people. So the scope of their advisory work was enlarged to cover that of all agencies of the state dealing with children and youth—such as the State Department of Social Welfare, the State Department of Education, of Public Health, of Mental Hygiene, and so on. The committee consists of 31 members, citizens drawn from all parts of the State. It met six times a year for two-day sessions. They did a lot of work in between meetings. Its members serve without compensation and are free of the restrictions upon government employees.



Bear in mind that the committee is advisory to the Governor—it has no authority; it operates no department; it has no staff. Its value comes from the soundness of its judgment and it's achieved its status through the recognition given to its proposals as they are put into effect by city, county, state officials, or organizations. The committee has used several different methods of operation: first, it makes requests or recommendations directly to the Governor; second, it makes requests or recommendations to the State Department Directors of Boards; third, it may act as a coordinating body in convening several State Department representatives or Statewide organizations . . . officials concerned with the same problem; for the committee may request a group of individuals to associate themselves together as an independent committee and carry through a particular project. Under its present organization, it has four standing committees: Executive, Legislation, Publicity, Conferences and Workshops. It has ten subcommittees on special problems of children and youth: mental health, community organizations, studies and surveys, rural life (and I was Chairman of rural life), health and medical care (I was on that, too), social service, work experience and employment, juvenile justice, education, and recreation. The Committee does not seek to take credit for what has been accomplished in the past six years . . . the members gain their satisfaction through knowing they have stimulated, encouraged, or assisted some agency or organization to take the initiative in providing needed protection for youth. In the past, some of the areas of concern have been: compilation of a peace officer's manual on juvenile control; the establishment of the Institute on Juvenile Control as a part of the School of Government at USC (the Watsonville Police Department sent one of its police officers to this school for three months to get the best training on how to handle juvenile cases.) Incidentally, we sent him and he came back, and then Salinas hired him away at a higher salary. We lost him. So the next time we sent someone down there, we made them sign a contract to come back and be indentured. And he's still with us, and became our police chief.

Another concern was a special crime study commission on juvenile justice to make recommendations on resolving conflicts in the laws affecting youth. And then the Governor's Youth Conference in Sacramento in 1948 and all the regional area conferences on youth which have followed. Those were grassroots attempts to get at the unmet needs of children and youth. Then, every ten years, there was a White House conference on children and youth. But two years before that, there was this tremendous buildup of county and state attempts to prepare a report for that conference.

**Jarrell:** So it was ongoing.

**Wyckoff:** Yes, it was ongoing. Then, another important concern was the encouragement of the establishment of community coordinating councils . . .



Jarrell: Yes.

**Wyckoff:** The encouragement of the establishment of youth centers, youth canteens, and youth councils; conducting studies leading to the establishment of the State Recreation Commission; obtaining foundation grants which were secured to make the study of transient youth in the state to determine the extent of the problem and many other problems.

### The 1950 White House Conference on Children and Youth

**Wyckoff:** In 1950, the Youth Committee had an important temporary assignment. Upon request of the President of the United States, the Governor asked the Youth Committee to make the plan for the participation of California in the 1950 mid-century White House Conference on Children and Youth which took place in December of 1950. The standing committee on workshops and conferences was put in charge of this assignment. Mrs. Rollin Brown, who was chairman of that committee, was a very efficient organizer and a tireless worker. Other members were Dr. Charlotte Elmott, psychologist in charge of the Santa Barbara School Guidance Program; Roy Sorensen of the YMCA; Mrs. Ruby Inlow of the Graduate School of Social Work at UCLA; and Judge William B. MacKesson of Los Angeles, chairman of the Governor's Advisory Committee. This group rolled up their sleeves and went to work. First of all, it did two things: first, it invited all the state organizations having an interest in children and youth to send representatives to a planning meeting in Sacramento, February 24, 1949. I believe there were at least two representatives from Watsonville there. They secured a grant from a foundation to employ a good staff of research people to handle the compilation and analysis of pertinent information. At this meeting in Sacramento, the general outline of the plan was laid out. There were to be four phases of the work. First, a study by the staff of all research that had been done on the subject of children and youth over the past fifty years and an analysis of the program made. Second, a special study of a few typical towns in California such as urban, rural, mountain, valley, suburban. Third, a survey made by the people of each community of itself, to see what problems it had with regard to children and youth and what was being done about it. And here was where we come in . . . (this is Watsonville) And fourth, on September 22, and 23, a final State Conference on Children and Youth was held in Sacramento which was our own mid-century conference, at which all the pertinent information gathered from these three surveys was offered and discussed, and from which came the final recommendations to the White House Conference.

So we come back to the original thought which is that each of these three projects, the Health Council, the Governor's Youth Committee, and the White House Conference, have something in common: they value the



independent thinking of the individual in the community. In this case, the individual is in Watsonville. These bodies all used the method of operation from the ground up, not from the top down . . . that is real democracy. I said [to the group in Watsonville]: "When this survey gets officially underway, I hope you will all take the opportunity to participate in the discussion, because I know everyone here has a valuable contribution to make to the thinking. Really you know it's not the White House Conference that matters as much as whether we get to know ourselves and our community." And I will give you a copy of the report of that Youth Coordinating Council which was made to the 1950 White House Conference.

### **The Influence of the Social Work Movement**

**Wyckoff:** The movement of the social work profession into the political arena and gaining more knowledge of what made things tick was naturally the direction I went in. I welcomed very much the guidance of the kinds of social workers who had really had experience in group work. I found them thrilling people. I hadn't really known any of them before this. I had known a lot of the one-to-one type case-workers, and up to then I hadn't really realized the importance of social work as it emerged fostering the group, democratic process for citizens in a community. Well Brownie Lee Jones was a good group worker, and I found her absolutely thrilling. She worked among the industrial women of San Francisco. Annie Chloe Watson did too . . . so I had known them before. In fact they got me into the Conference of Social Work where there were quite a few of them.

**Jarrell:** You mean social workers who were not so much working from the one-to-one client-oriented point of view, but the emerging activist social workers who focussed on institutional and community change?

**Wyckoff:** Yes, the Conference was a little different from the others. My mind is no good, you know, without reading through all these documents and papers from the past. You get to be my age, you don't remember things.

### **Helen MacGregor**

**Wyckoff:** These pieces of paper do it. Did you ever see Helen MacGregor's summary of [inaudible]?





Jarrell: Bancroft's Regional Oral History Office has done a whole interview with her and I read part of it.<sup>29</sup> It was fascinating.

Wyckoff: Helen MacGregor is a very interesting figure in all this. She was, of course, a lawyer, and she was Governor Warren's chief law clerk. She covered a very wide range of subjects, the whole of government. And that's what made her so valuable on the Governor's Advisory Committee . . . because she was chairman for a long time, and she was a marvelous person. She was an old friend of Hubert's; I don't know whether they went to law school together; no, they didn't go together . . . but they have known each other a very long time. Helen MacGregor finally became a member of the board of the Youth Authority after Governor Warren left. She got primarily interested in the work of juvenile justice. She was on the Youth Authority Board for a long, long time . . . and that is the hardest working board . . . oh, they really work. They have to hear each individual case of all the youngsters that have to be on parole. And to make these decisions is really . . . you have to investigate the facilities and do all kinds of background research for each case, and it's very difficult. She was a marvelous member.

But Helen was the kind of person who was so dedicated. For example, she had an old home right in the middle of Oakland . . . She was surrounded by a great wave of blacks, who moved in all around [her]. Would she move out? No. She stayed and worked with them and tried like anything to help give them the benefit of her skills and what she could do to help uplift that neighborhood. And, you know, she was really great. She died there as a matter of fact. So I have the greatest admiration for her. She did contribute a great deal. She was quite a, well . . . conventional, solid, rockrib Republican supporter of Governor Warren. And for her to go to those conferences on Families who Follow the Crops and listen to those arguments that went on. And to stand up to, to support me through that, you know. It was hard; very hard. But she did; she was a rock of support.

Jarrell: And that was kind of a different crowd there at those conferences, you could say.

Wyckoff: Oh, very!

Jarrell: (Laughter)

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<sup>29</sup>Helen R. MacGregor, *A Career in Public Service with Earl Warren*. (Berkeley, 1973) Introduction by Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the United States. Interviewed by Gabrielle Morris, June Hagan and Amelia Frye—Editor.



## An Ax to Grind

**Wyckoff:** But I came into this [the Governor's Advisory Committee], you know, with a goal in mind. And I wasn't going to give it up because I got into this milieu of people who did *not* understand *any* of what I was talking about. You have no idea how that Governor's Advisory Committee always had at the head of it in the early days . . . well, it had old Judge McKesson, a typical city man; a southern gentleman type who . . . he simply could not *understand* what I was trying to do. He would say to me, "But the laws are equal . . . they protect people in the rural area just as much as in the urban area. Why do you need new protections? Why do you need this or that? . . ." I had to sit down with that man over I don't know how many bourbons (laughter) and try to explain to him that the laws are applied differently. He didn't even know that agricultural workers are excluded from many protection laws. He just didn't understand it at all. Well, he was narrow and of course he was so devoted to the Governor. I was one who was trying to work on him . . . and Lucille Kennedy who was the staff person from the Department of Social Welfare; she's another who tried hard to educate him to things that were a little different. She did it by going to baseball games with him. (Laughter) I didn't do that; I've never been able to do that. So it was hard.

**Jarrell:** Well, during this early tenure . . . now you obviously accepted this position which was an appointment of honor, really . . .

**Wyckoff:** Yes.

**Jarrell:** But you certainly didn't decide that you were just going to settle in there and be moved along by whatever current . . .

**Wyckoff:** Oh no, no.

**Jarrell:** I mean you had something absolutely in mind.

**Wyckoff:** I had an ax to grind really.

**Jarrell:** What was your ax?

**Wyckoff:** Well, I was going to carry out what I considered my responsibility, which was to find out about rural children and report back to the Governor about this. Now that was one agenda.

**Jarrell:** Yes. So they were your constituency in a sense.

**Wyckoff:** I have also other agendas that came later which I'll talk about later that had to do with the Watts riots . . . and the rising tensions among youngsters, and I got deeply concerned about that. Because I felt that was the



kind of thing that ought to be tackled with the tools of community organization and not . . . I didn't think there was any other medicine that would work. So . . . I mean . . . that was when I became chairman of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth. Well, now let's not get ahead too fast.

### Health Projects for Migrant Families

I want to read to you something I wrote, *Health Projects for Migrant Farm Families*, page 6, published by the National Consumers Committee for Research and Education, Washington, D. C."<sup>30</sup>

My story begins in the fall of 1949, which was unusually hot. The cotton crop was picked early and more workers than usual were employed. A wet winter followed causing a longer period of employment. Local agencies exhausted their resources trying to alleviate the suffering. Malnutrition became worse and worse. Infant diarrhea spread through the (San Joaquin) valley, and more and more babies died. The county had to set up a special fund to bury them. (This is Fresno County) The workers felt that no one cared about their hardships and the growers felt that they were blamed for tragedy and misery that was not their responsibility. The reason for that was that they let the workers stay over when there was no more work and charged them no rent and said you may have the cabins to live in. The public decided that because of that, the grower was responsible for those people. And they had no food, no welfare, no nothing, no eligibility for care, and they were just simply dying of starvation out in these places. And the growers claimed it wasn't their responsibility; they were giving them free rent, you see. Recriminations flew back and forth; feeling ran high, and wild rumors added to the tension. National publicity on the death of twenty eight infants brought about a crisis. And that's what struck [Governor] Warren as a big political issue. Governor Warren asked the State Department of Public Health to take the lead in calling together the various public agencies in the valley to set up a temporary, emergency program of aid to alleviate the distress. Nurses, doctors, welfare workers, health educators, teachers, nutritionists, Red Cross, and Agricultural Extension workers all pitched in to see what they could do to help. An

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<sup>30</sup>*Health Projects for Migrant Farm Families: California's Experience*, Washington, D.C.: National Consumers Committee for Research and Education, 1963—Editor.



inter-agency committee was formed which met weekly until the crisis passed. Of course it never passed.

Jarrell: It never passed.

Wyckoff: Representatives from all services discussed the problems and laid the groundwork for future teamwork in long-range planning. All of the valley citizens in different walks of life volunteered to do their part. There were some thoughtful citizens who were already quietly working, making constructive plans for the future.

For example . . . Mrs. Mina Teilman, the chairman of the Health Committee of the Fresno Coordinating Council and a member of the grand jury, arranged to take members of the grand jury on a tour of the labor camps to get a first-hand knowledge of the peculiar problems of remoteness, lack of proper food, clothing, and shelter, and the obstacles that stood in the way of extending health, sanitation, and other desperately needed services to the camp dwellers. This remarkable woman was a small grower herself and understood employers' problems. She had taken the lead for many years in trying to build up an adequate health department in the county. And she had a comprehensive knowledge of the principles of good public health and was the ideal citizen to act as a spark among many groups for improved health services to this badly neglected segment of the population. She was a stubborn Danish woman, and a really great gal. Upon request of a group of citizens, the Governor appointed a committee to survey the agricultural labor resources of the San Joaquin Valley in the spring of 1950. This committee held hearings up and down the valley and published a report and recommendations . . . one of the best sources of information ever produced on this subject. I doubt if your library has it.

Jarrell: We don't.

Wyckoff: "Seven Thousand Children in the Birth of a New Neighborliness" is the title of this part. And I'd like to read this as well, if you don't mind.

Jarrell: Oh, go ahead.

Wyckoff:

As one of the emergency measures taken in the winter of 1949, the U.S. Public Health Service was asked to conduct an intensive study of the causes of infant diarrhea which was killing so many of these babies. A nationally known specialist was sent out to plan the program. Seven thousand children under the age of ten were given rectal examinations for this study.

The remarkable success of the scientific hunt for this killer can be read in an article entitled "Diarrhea Diseases in Fresno County," by James Watt, M.D.,





A.C. Hollister, M.D., M.B. Beck and E. C. Hemple by any one of you who are interested, in the *American Journal of Public Health Problems*, Volume 43, No. 6, June, 1953. I consider that to be almost a revolutionary document. It was just amazing.

I continue:

More important than this discovery was the birth of a new relationship with our neighbors who lived in the camps. This new pattern formed a basis for much of the future progress. To do the door-to-door visiting necessary to locate seven thousand children to be examined . . . and above all to gain the understanding and cooperation of their parents . . . presented a tremendous challenge to the few public health nurses. As one school principal on the West Side of the San Joaquin Valley said, "Here we have a people who live in a group, yet know nothing about group living. Their unit of living is the family. Because of poor economic conditions, lack of educational opportunities in the states from which they came, we find these people exceedingly ignorant and fearful. Never having had services offered to them before, they're very reluctant to accept them. It has taken a very special form of group dynamics on the part of the personnel working in this project to gain acceptance.

This is where the concept of group work became clear to me in its application in a very interesting way, and that's why I wanted to study it. To me, it was enormously significant. This was a report made to the National Conference of Social Work because I thought they should know about this. I'll read more from the Report:

A few parents were persuaded to attend the first well-baby clinic held in the cabin. Here came some of the least shy parents, who had gained a little confidence in the nurses . . . the doctors and the public health program. Around these few parents was slowly built the nucleus of camp-health committees. These committees were started by the nurses in twenty six large labor camps. Little by little, with much work and encouragement from the nurses, the committees grew to fifty members each. The reason for the survey was explained: 'We're all trying to find out what makes so many babies sick.' This idea was talked over until it gained acceptance. Farmworker parents shared in the work of door-to-door visiting each family to explain the need for this health measure. The eighth grade pupils, many of whom were quite adult, and for whom it would be the last year of school, were given a responsible share in the great campaign to reach every family with the story. Gradually the idea that they were



neighbors trying to help one another grew. Thus the first step was taken in learning to work together as a group.

The camp health committee began to talk over their problems; the nurses taught sanitation, personal hygiene, and baby care. The Agricultural Extension, a member of the inner agency team, developed techniques for suitable camp living, demonstrating the use of surplus commodities and other foods which were available, but hadn't been used because they weren't understood. All of these group activities were conducted in the crowded space of a tiny cabin, but they generated the feeling of community spirit.

An equally important part of the community we are discussing were the growers. Here too, a new relationship was developing. You must realize that westside growers are different from city employers. The growers who participated in the health program, were a progressive nucleus among other growers, but measured by urban standards, they might not be so considered at all. They have a high resistance to any form of union organization and most of them object to any measures that would include their employees in unemployment insurance programs. They usually prefer Mexican labor and resent any interference with this labor supply. Those who are concerned with the health of their employees have a horror of being labeled "do-gooders." An atmosphere in which the hard man is admired makes it uncomfortable to live under the stigma of an avowed concern for the conditions of the migrants. To a grower who gave unemployed families free shelter in his camp, blame for their hunger and illness seemed to him most unfair. Many other growers simply closed their camps and let the families seek shelter elsewhere. Resentment ran very high among those who tried to help and they were bitterly criticized. And they felt in no mood to cooperate.

It was most fortunate that the local health officer happened to have chosen a particularly gifted director of nurses. She gathered us a corps of skillful, public health nurses, and inspired them with a sense of dedication to their work. Her genius lay in choosing and training these nurses to treat the poorest worker with gentleness and dignity no matter what his condition. And never to talk down to him, but to maintain an attitude of equal give-and-take, which let a man keep his self-respect. It was significant that dictatorial methods didn't work either on a cotton-picker or a grower. An approach to either required an equal amount of tact and diplomacy to gain his cooperation.



I think you have to realize at this time that the work force was not all Mexican.

Jarrell: Oh yes, I know.

Wyckoff: There were a lot of Okies.

Jarrell: Oh, absolutely.

Wyckoff: And very independent Okies. And there were Negroes. And it was mixed. It wasn't the way it is now—almost all Mexicans.

Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: I'll continue reading: "The key to success at this moment was the decision to drop all recrimination and accent the positive."

Jarrell: Well.

Wyckoff:

It meant looking for ways to do something constructive within the framework of the possible, and with the materials at hand. The first real attempt to join hands and pull all the different elements of the West Side into a cooperative effort was this diarrhea survey. The growers gave the cabins for the clinics; the grower's wives, and the foreman's wives, and the cotton pickers all pitched in, side by side, to do the work. This was the first community effort. Then others joined in. The county medical society began to take an interest in the West Side. And when the United States Public Health Service communicable disease specialists presented the proposed survey, it was able to enlist a number of physicians to help.

On the state level, the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth was doing all it could to encourage a good interdepartmental teamwork to develop needed services. But it soon became plain that the real progress could be made only if sound community planning was conducted on the local level.

That's where I came in. The Advisory Committee discovered that here was the ability, the desire, and the courage on the part of a good cross-section of local citizens to sit down and try to prevent a repetition of the disaster. The one thing that seemed lacking was a rallying point. Then by a strange coincidence, word came from the National Consumers League of a legacy" . . . this was the Lasker Legacy [bequest] . . . to be used for the



improvement of the living conditions of migratory agricultural workers and their families.

. . . and even though we'd never applied for or gotten that money, the fact that it was available as a possible source of funds, was enough to sort of pull everybody together and give them hope. This was good news to the interagency team. It was what was needed to call into being the Rural Health and Education Committee Incorporated . . . it was composed of growers, doctors, camp committee members, teachers, and other leaders. They took a careful look at the past and decided to do a piece of pioneering, trying to demonstrate a new way of making a genuine community out of the West Side. All the local resources that could be found were rounded up, but still it was not enough to do the job.

So funds were sought from the Rosenberg Foundation in order to carry the plans through the demonstration period. Afterwards those services which proved effective could be made a permanent part of a public program if the citizens so desired.

So at this point, you see, I was transferring what skill and experience I've gained here (in Watsonville) by setting up this health council in trying to encourage these people into solving their own problems. I used to go there twice a week and just watch over them and do everything I could to help them.

Jarrell: What a terrible situation compared to the relative calm . . . here, I mean.

Wyckoff: Oh yes, at that point.

Jarrell: I mean that was a real test.

Wyckoff: Yes, it was a critical situation. And I had to get acquainted with the people. We just decided that Fresno County was the place where the demonstration ought to be made. The chairman of the Rural Health and Education Committee, Tom O'Neill, was a West Side cotton-grower. He helped to make sure that "this was the folks out on the West Side trying to solve their own problems, and not the city folks telling them what they'd better do out there."

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Wyckoff: He was very interesting. It was decided after a few meetings that the most pressing need was for larger quarters in which to hold the clinics. So





the chairman, Tom O'Neill, led off by making his contribution in the form of a beautiful health center as the first building in a planned community center.

**Jarrell:** Isn't he the man who built . . . contributed the clinic, all himself? Was he the one who did that?

**Wyckoff:** Built it himself?

**Jarrell:** Isn't he the grower that built the . . .

**Wyckoff:** Yes, he built the whole health center, yes.

**Jarrell:** That's right.

**Wyckoff:** But so did some of the others." So the chairman led off by making his contribution in the form of a health center, as the first building in a planned community center which would contain a model childcare center, a model home demonstration and Red Cross classroom and recreation hall. The health center was a *joint* effort in which the camp committee also shared . . . making the furniture, making the equipment and the curtains. Soon other growers came and looked it over. One grower who suffered a bad fiasco when he tried to do something for his workers, but gave them no part in the enterprise." Yes. "The workers expressed their resentment against him by wrecking the center he'd built for them," because they never shared in creating it.

**Jarrell:** They just trashed it?

**Wyckoff:** When we proposed a cooperative effort he said, "Well, I'm willing to play ball this way. I'll put up the building if the rest will chip in and help on it, and we'll be in it together." I'll really give him credit because he did try again and the second time was successful because he included them. See, he was a former small farmer who just became one of the big, big growers out there . . . a self-made man. "Other growers came by to see the O'Neill's center and talked with the nurses about the building plans and before long there were six good health centers built, equipped and donated to the project. Then came the first grant of money from the Rosenberg Foundation . . . \$22,000 in 1959 to help launch the new demonstration." This was so little, you know, when I think of it. (Laughter)

**Jarrell:** Compared to today.

**Wyckoff:** But it was the big push that did it.

**Jarrell:** You're reading more from the Report?

**Wyckoff:** Yes.



The plans for this health program were developed from information gained in the course of the first diarrhea survey which pointed sharply to the need of general medical clinics for the family as well as for the prenatal and child health conferences. It became clear that the clinics would have to be held at night so the whole family, an inseparable unit, could come without too much loss of work.

The service finally set up for demonstration was an extension of the medical care program of the county hospital which provided treatment for emergency conditions plus the regular preventive and education programs of the Department of Health. Each month, eight medical care and five prenatal clinics were held in addition to the well-baby clinics and they were staffed by a heroic group of doctors and nurses who drove eighty and ninety miles and up through barren country at night over rough roads, to bring desperately needed care week after week to the families out in the remotest labor camps.

The condition of the patients clearly demonstrated the great need for the clinics. Nearly all the women showed a very low hemoglobin count. Many significant lessons were learned on why it is unrealistic to try to superimpose urban patterns in rural areas. For example, one night at the prenatal clinic, the first one in line was a man. The women urged the doctor to care for him first. He had an agonizing abscess in his ear caused by a sharp thorn from a cotton boll. The doctor had come only with the equipment for the prenatal work and had to improvise equipment to treat this man. Luckily the doctor was a general practitioner and a man with imagination equal to the situation. This incident shed some light on why a specialist was sometimes unhappy about serving in the camp clinics where he was the only doctor within reach of a large number of people in pressing need of all kinds of medical care.

Lessons like this taught the way to adjust the services to the migrants' way of life. Again and again good preventive work was done to arrest the spread of communicable disease. Perhaps the most thrilling moment was when the news went around that the high infant mortality rate had begun to drop . . . there was great rejoicing. Later word came there was no longer need for the infant burial fund." The drop in infant mortality was partly due to the fact that the illness was apprehended earlier when it was curable. Fewer desperate last-minute dashes were made to the county hospital fifty miles away with a hopelessly sick baby far gone beyond the possibility of help. Now that



general medical care clinics were within reach twice a week, it was possible to watch over the infants and teach the parents how to prevent the dreadful dehydration which led to death. There was much follow-up work done by the nurses visiting in the homes. And wherever they went, the lessons of sanitation and personal hygiene were taught to prevent the spread of disease.<sup>31</sup>

This is not easy to do in cabins without water on a dirt floor. Naturally there was much greater success where the water was piped in and it was possible to keep the cabin clean. The camp committees were encouraged by the visible improvement in the health of their families and increased their share of the door-to-door educational work. The growers took more pride in their community centers and began to build more cabins with inside plumbing. More and more agencies began to develop suitable programs geared to the life of the camps. It is not possible to tell the fascinating story of the experiments made by each member of this team of agencies . . . the childcare center, the Red Cross home nursing teacher, the Division of Home Missions Migrant Ministry, the Agricultural Home Demonstration Agent, and the Girl Scouts, the TB Association, and many others . . . used imagination, skill, and a true spirit of good neighborliness with their fine work in the West Side centers.

### Schools for Migrant Children

**Wyckoff:** The story of the schools for migrant children and the remarkable genius of the West Side school superintendent . . . that man was just wonderful . . . pioneering in new methods and materials, deserves a whole book in itself. There, too, the Rosenberg Foundation made possible a good special study of the needs of seasonal farm workers' children in fifteen school districts. And this was the book that was financed by the Rosenberg Foundation—it's called *The Handbook on Teaching Children Who Move With the Crops* by Helen Cowan Wood. And it's available from the Fresno schools. And we've used it over here in Watsonville. It's a remarkable book. It makes it possible for a child to gain something each day regardless of whether he's there the next day or the day after.

**Jarrell:** Was it each day should be a valuable, meaningful . . .

**Wyckoff:** It was . . . each day was a valuable thing in itself. And to do that for this particular group of children required a technique that was nothing short

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<sup>31</sup>The survey revealed that the infant deaths rose in exact proportion to the distance of the cabin from the water faucet. Water faucets are now required in all labor camp cabins. [FW]



of genius, if you compare it with the red-tape that most school systems have. Do not think this is a simple success story. There have been frustrations and disappointments. And there have been many problems that have flatly defied solution. For example, no satisfactory way has been found to provide for the custodial care of an infant up to two years of age. Too often they are found locked in a hot automobile or left under a cotton bush in the path of a machine or in a cabin under the care of a small child. After much effort, a lovely childcare center was built, but it was found that state laws do not permit the care of infants under two years of age in such places under the supervision of the school. Our social legislation is based upon the sound philosophy that the baby should be in the mother's care.

Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: And that the mother should be able to stay home with the baby. But when the mother is asked to stay home from the fields, she gives the harsh answer, "Well, if we don't all work, we don't eat." All the troubles of the seasonal agricultural workers stem from the root of lack of year-round employment. The average 168-days-a-year work is simply not enough to hold body and soul together. The members of the rural health and education committee are fully aware of this basic difficulty and are valiantly struggling to overcome it. One grower managed to provide work year-round by setting up a supplementary industry. That was a fishing-reel factory started by Frank Coit . . . that was really interesting. More and more, mechanization is reducing the need for the harvest worker who follows the sun. But we all know that he's going to be with us for a long time to come. The committee knows that it's meeting only a fraction of the need, but it is continuing to search for new ways to improve the lot of this necessary but neglected man and his family. Maybe we'd better just go on in as far as we can to this while we're at it . . . everything in 1948. I have to take threads and follow them.

### The Success of the Fresno Demonstration Project

Wyckoff: For ten years following the successful establishment of the Fresno West Side clinic, adjoining California counties took little interest in the demonstrations made in Fresno County, and they failed to adopt similar programs. You see, I was reporting back to the Governor's Advisory Committee on the progress of the work in the San Joaquin Valley's West Side . . . the demonstration was great . . . but nobody else picked it up. Strange to say, people came from India, from the Philippines, from the World Health Organization, and from UNESCO to look at this experiment. The United Nations referred scholars, students, doctors, and home economists who came through and spent from one day to many months studying this operation. We actually had a doctor, Elizabeth Kelley, on the staff who acted as a guide for the numerous foreign visitors who had heard of the work. The Minister of Health from India, a woman medical doctor, looked us over and said, "We





never knew we shared with you the common bond of real poverty. We thought all your streets were paved with gold. And it made us feel hopelessly remote. But seeing this project helps us to know that you, too, are struggling with some of the same problems we have. And here we can learn from you." I thought that was great.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** A home economist from Southeast Asia said, "We wish to hear how you have been able to relate your teaching to the family which must buy a sauce pan for 5¢ and cook over a camp stove. This is very different from a demonstration of cooking on the latest model GE stove with the new pressure cookers, blenders, and mixers that we cannot afford to buy." (Laughter) In 1952, the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Republic decided to help tell the story of the Fresno West Side with a program on their series of national broadcasts headed by Milton Eisenhower called "The People Speak." This was an effort to strengthen the processes of democracy by letting people tell in their own words how they set about to solve a community problem with local initiative using what resources they could develop themselves. The technical staff set out from New York in the middle of the winter, found itself bogged down in the mud out on the West Side in flooded cotton fields.

**Jarrell:** (Laughter)

**Wyckoff:** And saw at firsthand what the life of an agricultural worker living in a winter camp was like.

**Jarrell:** Pretty grim.

**Wyckoff:** It was a great surprise to some of them who had never been far from the sidewalks of New York. They recorded taped interviews with growers, farm workers and their families, nurses, doctors, teachers, home economists, church and voluntary agency workers, and so on. Unfortunately because of the brief time allowed for broadcasting on a national scale, little of the tape survived the editing scissors. I'm hoping that somewhere they kept that . . . Milton Eisenhower was responsible for that.

**Jarrell:** Really.

**Wyckoff:** And I think the original tapes are in Pennsylvania. If anybody wanted to check back, I think they could be found there. If they haven't been cut to ribbons, you know.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Wyckoff:** The broadcast nevertheless created enough interest nationally so that hundreds of letters were received by the radio station inquiring about



details of the Fresno West Side story . . . you see this was beginning now to move nationally. This was laying the groundwork for the Migrant Health Act on a national scale.

Jarrell: Yes.

### **Migrant Health Conditions: The Results in California**

**Wyckoff:** In spite of this radio publicity, and in spite of a fine series of articles in the *Fresno Bee* by James MacClatchey, describing the service, no other county in California actually tried to extend into the field those services capable of being adapted to the setting in which the agricultural worker lives. The prevalent attitude was this: farm workers are just like other folks. The service is here at headquarters; let them come and get it if they are eligible under our residence laws.

Jarrell: *If* they're eligible under those laws.

**Wyckoff:** Well, they didn't even come and get it because they were so far away anyway.

Jarrell: Yes. That's right.

**Wyckoff:** To have to drive a hundred miles every time you felt sick. Well, who can do that? Overlooked was the fact that agricultural workers were by definition excluded from income-maintenance programs such as unemployment insurance . . . even in our relatively progressive state . . . and many counties restrict medical care service to residents only. What is more, distance, language, and cultural barriers, and a lack of acceptance, act to shut the door on most such families.

However, there were professional health societies studying and observing the results of the technique. The International Union for Health Education of the Public at a meeting in Rome in 1955 awarded a silver cup to the Fresno County Health Department for their exhibit on migrant health. At the presentation of the award, Dr. Robert Monlux, health officer of Fresno County, said, "Before the start of this program, the children of these workers were dying of diarrhea, receiving little or no education, and families were living in appalling ignorance and filth. Medical care was non-existent because of ignorance and distance from medical centers. We can now report that infant mortality has dropped over fifty percent." That was Monlux's talk that he gave at the Rome meeting.



## The First Conference on Families Who Follow the Crops

Wyckoff: However, finally in 1959 . . . now you see, I'm going quite far ahead.

Jarrell: Yes.

Wyckoff: The Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth decided to try a new approach. The subcommittee on Children of Seasonal Farm Workers was enlarged . . . I was chairman of that . . . to include a few of the members of the Fresno Rural Health and Education Committee and other persons concerned. It was decided to act as a convenor of interested persons familiar with the daily living of the farm workers throughout the state. Invitations were issued to the thirty counties having the most agricultural workers . . . farmers, farm workers, nurses, doctors, teachers, welfare workers, supervisors, and other public officials, church and voluntary agency workers were invited to participate in a two-day meeting in Fresno . . . to find areas of agreement in which they could move forward to improve conditions. They addressed recommendations to the Governor, to state and local private bodies.

The meeting was called the First Annual Conference on Families That Follow the Crops. It met March 2 and 3, 1959 in Fresno. About two hundred and fifty persons attended. They were divided into study groups discussing health and welfare, housing, education, recreation, and group work. A plenary session was devoted to a number of significant developments in the field of community organization to upgrade the living conditions of farm workers. For example Dr. Benjamin Packer, a private physician and internist, for many years a Fresno West Side night clinic doctor, gave the details of the medical program and how it operated. Now there's a publication on that. Anna Price Garner . . . a specially trained home economist of the University of California Extension Service [I think Rosenberg helped in her training]—told the story of the development of a specialized teaching program adapted to farm worker families in their normal setting. In other sessions, farmers and farm workers told their problems and discussed possible solutions with professional agency staff. The final session wound up with a recommendation that the steering committee carry on and try to encourage the counties to hold similar meetings. Now that was the effort to get other counties to think about it.<sup>32</sup>

Jarrell: Did they?

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<sup>32</sup>*Report of the First Annual Conference on Families Who Follow the Crops, March 2 and 3, 1959, Fresno, California, 1959.* Copies of the reports are available in the Wyckoff Archive in Special Collections, McHenry Library, UCSC—Editor.



**Wyckoff:** Yes. Here again is where the unknown factor of personality enters. A community which has a real sparkplug person is often the one where an issue lights up and catches fire. So it was with Santa Clara County. Several such persons, including a public health nurse, came from there to the Fresno Conference, and they went home and started something.

For example, in Gilroy at the far southern end of the county, a few private medical doctors and public health nurses tried to adapt the plan used in Fresno to fit their agricultural community in order to see if better care could be given in that area. Gilroy was just a little too far for the needy farmworkers to travel to the county hospital in San Jose for help. The doctors and public health nurses took their proposals to the South County Service Council which had accepted the plan and undertook to coordinate efforts to raise funds and make the program a reality. Many local organizations including the Hispanic groups such as the Community Service Organization joined hands to raise funds for the establishment of a general medical night clinic at Gilroy. The Spanish-speaking community of the town among whom were many farm workers helped to serve a fund-raising dinner for the clinic and then invited everybody for miles around. It was the most marvelous feast I ever went to. The Spanish-speaking community in Gilroy provided delicious food to eat there or to take home. They raised enough money to put the drive over the top and enabled the doors of the clinic to open. Participation by the Mexican-American group in the effort to start the clinic was a very important factor in getting their acceptance of modern medical care and in feeling welcome at the clinic. The money so raised was paid to the Santa Clara County Medical Society to operate the clinic for a year to gather data for future plans for proper medical care of the seasonal farm workers in this area.

Funds ran low due to the great backlog of unmet medical needs among the families. An appeal was made to the Lucy Stern Foundation for a grant to carry the demonstration to its conclusion. The grant was made and the work went on for a year. The night clinics were well-attended and filled a great need. The county, however, would not assume responsibility for continuance of the clinic, so it died after a year to the deep disappointment of a large portion of the community.

As much is learned by failure as by success. There were valuable lessons in Gilroy which were later applied to elsewhere. For example: the inclusion of the Spanish-speaking farm workers themselves in planning and interpreting a health program increases its acceptance by this group. Second, it was totally inappropriate to request the county medical society to assume the responsibility for the operation and administration of such a project. In this instance, the society turned the work over to a public relations expert who had no experience in administration. The result was poor public relations for the doctors and poor management of the clinic. Third, not enough growers showed interest in or support for the Gilroy clinic in contrast to the Fresno





West Side clinic. In retrospect, it is clear now that the clinic should have been administered jointly by the county public health department and the county hospital. Unfortunately, the sparsely-populated southern portions of the county did not have enough political weight with the county government to gain a priority for this clinic over many pressing urban needs in the northern part of the county. In other words, there was a failure on the part of the county as a whole to accept this method of making sure the services which are supposedly available to everyone in need, became an actuality for the domestic farm worker. So at the end of 1959, it was still true that only in Fresno had the demonstration succeeded in becoming a permanent service. Even in Fresno County, the fifteen monthly night clinics were confined to the remote West Side only. A full report was made to the 1960 White House Conference on Children and Youth.

Next time I will give the story of the federal legislation which resulted in the passage of the Migrant Health Act.<sup>33</sup>

Jarrell: I would certainly like that.

Wyckoff: We'll do that next time. Okay?

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<sup>33</sup>The story is continued in volume III—Editor.



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